



**UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**AFROCENTRIC PLACEMAKING AND ARCHITECTURE IN  
CONTEMPORARY URBAN BUILT FORM: A Case of Bulawayo's Civic  
Precinct, Zimbabwe**

**Majahamahle Nene Mthethwa**

BAS, B. Arch, (*Auckland*, NZ), M. Arch, (*UCT*, RSA),  
PhD (Arch) (*UKZN*, RSA)

A Thesis Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

Architecture Discipline  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA  
**March 2019**

# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this PhD thesis is my own unaided work except where otherwise acknowledged. The work has been carried out under the supervision of Emeritus Professor Ambrose A. Adebayo and is being submitted, through the discipline of Architecture, to the School of Built Environment and Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, for a PhD in Architecture. The work has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university or institution of higher learning within and outside South Africa.

Name: Majahamahle Nene MTHETHWA

Signed:



Date:

28/03/2019



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with the utmost gratitude that I acknowledge the following people and organisations without whom this research could not have been conducted:

## **My supervisor, Emeritus Prof Ambrose A. Adebayo:**

I am eternally grateful for your patience that I stretched to the limit, and your resourcefulness, sensitivity, camaraderie, and wisdom in supervising and mentoring me throughout this long haul. I embarked on this study under trying conditions but you made lightweight of them. Your experience in both teaching and practice has been a great resource that inspired me to soldier on. Working with you in the studio was a great honour .... an experience through which I acquired skills that have elevated me to an appreciable level of my academic career path.

## **The University of KwaZulu-Natal:**

My gratitude to the University for initial sponsorship during the course of my studies. I am particularly grateful to Dean Professor Ernest Nene Khalema and Professor Oliver Mtapuri for your efforts in securing partial sponsorship to complete my fieldwork and editing, respectively. God bless. I am also grateful for the assistance by Support Staff in the School, including Ranjini, Thandeka, Thuli, Nolundi, Kanagie, Kogan and many others.

## **Bulawayo City Council:**

I thank the Bulawayo City Council for giving me an opportunity to work in and around Bulawayo, particularly the Civic Precinct. Many thanks to all the respondents and informants in and around Mthwakazi. *Lihle elikaMthwakazi*. George Sithole - City Hall Library, Ngiyabonga.

## **UKZN Architecture Discipline:**

Thanks to members of the discipline for their support in enabling me to take Sabbatical Leave and for relieving me of my heavy teaching responsibilities during the finalisation of my thesis. Special thanks to Naresh Singh, Magda Cloete, Dr Yashaen Luckan and Lawrence Ogunsanya for their support during the final stages of my research. Many thanks to Judith Tinuke Ojo-Aromokudu for last minute assistance. I am grateful for the assistance of Librarians Seema Maharaj, Nontobeko Sikhosana (Main Library) and Abbu Ravi Govender (Architecture Library) as well as Tim Reddy, who has since retired. Michelle Jacobs, (Architecture Library) thanks for binding assistance.

## **Friends:**

I thank Dr Godfrey Musvoto and Dr Lovemore Chipungu for their encouragement from the outset of this research process. My invaluable discussions with you enhanced my research. Many thanks to Thando Nyathi and Viloshin Govender for your beautiful sketches. Sanele Mkhwanazi, thanks for your company during my fieldwork. You stabilised the fieldwork

process. Special thanks to Pathisa Nyathi for priceless insights into African wisdom. *Ukwanda kwaliwa ngabathakathi.*

**My family:**

Thanks to MaDube, MaSibisi, Lwandle, Khwezi and Sphe for your emotional and other support. You were my pillars of strength in this rollercoaster journey. Ngibonge ukuphila kwakho ntombi yakwaNkabinde. *Konke kuzolunga.*

**Deanne Collins:**

Thanks for offering your precious time at the critical time of the year with respect to various submissions. My heartfelt thanks for your assistance in terms of editing and proofreading my thesis. Your suggestions and critique were very constructive and useful in helping me to compile a professionally written final document. Thanks for going beyond your call of duty in comforting me during bumpy moments.

Last, but not least, I give thanks to The Almighty for being with me throughout this journey replete with trials and tribulations but still, in the end ..... delightful.

# DEDICATION



Paint D (McBride, 1976: 24)

**TO: ISIZWE SIKAMTHWAKAZI**

**“Africa must be studied from within in order to reclaim her (sic) identity”**

(Archibald Monwabisi Mafeje in: Dastile, 2013: 93)

# CITATION

The study focused on contemporary African cities that largely reflect non-responsiveness to Afrocentric placemaking and architectural decolonisation that embodies collectively accepted social equality, justice and identity. The research adopted symbolic interactionism that evokes indigenous ecological features to encourage creation of locally responsive built environments. A Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) model was developed to innovatively conceptualise Afrocentric architectural urbanism in contemporary African cities that exude authenticity in existential genius loci.

# ABSTRACT

Inspired by Afrocentrism ideologists such as Molefi Kete Asante (2007), the researcher advocates for non-dominance of one community by any other, as this has created problems across sub-Saharan Africa.

The social phenomenon of internal colonialism thrives on cultural authoritarianism that the ruling elites or dominant social groups accentuate through the built environment. This study explored collectively accepted makings of Afrocentric sources that would inspire Afrocentric placemaking and architecture in contemporary urban built form and promote social equality, justice and a sense of belonging. The study of these Afrocentric sources would motivate architects to design contemporary local built environments that respond to African value systems.

The study focused on the Mthwakazi Nation's historic capital, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. A mixed method approach was adopted, with a qualitative method applied generally and a quantitative one locally.

Special consideration was given to concerns such as African cosmological orientation, culture and identity that pivoted indigenous legal, political, governance and economic institutions. This enabled a narration of precolonial built forms. Various concepts and theories such as placemaking, social identity, symbolic interaction theory, Afrocentricity and existential theory were drawn on to explore the possibility of contemporary architectural design and urbanism that captures the African worldview.

Given their ability to exhibit identity phenomena, the focus was civic spaces and buildings. International precedents such as the Sydney Opera House and its linkage to the Bennelong House in Australia, which demonstrate the extent to which Australia has taken on the mantle of European culture and the significance of historical events as a source of inspiration in urban placemaking. Symbolic interactionism evokes indigenous ecological features to encourage creation of locally responsive built

environments. The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature is presented in this study as a typical example.

Built forms and parallel historical developments were examined from the precolonial, to the colonial and postcolonial periods to identify appropriate Afrocentric sources for contemporary placemaking. In Zimbabwe, Shona traditional built forms were anchored by Great Zimbabwe while King Lobengula's historical settlement of koBulawayo reflects amaNdebele architectural developments that date back to KwaZulu. Both kinds of traditional settlements provide indicators to Afrocentric sources for envisaged strategies in placemaking and architecture in African cities.

To the African mind circularity and movement capture what the cosmos represents. Movement is rhythmic, regular and seasonal. With respect to symbolic interactionism, circularity and movement is how the cosmos reflects itself to an African mind; hence the criticality of organic and rhythmic motion in his/her art and architecture. The study contends that the Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) knowledge model is to assist the conceptualisation of Afrocentric placemaking and architecture in contemporary urban built form and thus create an authentically existential sense of belonging in African cities.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>CITATION .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>FIGURES .....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>PLATES .....</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>TABLES .....</b>	<b>xxiii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>1.1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1.1 Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1.2 Justification for the study .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2.1 Definition of the problem .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.2.2 Aims .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.2.3 Objectives .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.3.1 Delimitation of research problem .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>1.3.2 Definition of terms .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>1.3.3 Stating the assumptions .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.3.4 Key questions .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1.3.5 Hypothesis .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1.4 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>1.4.1 Placemaking .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>1.4.2 Social identity .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.4.3 Symbolic interaction theory .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>1.4.4 Afrocentricity .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.4.5 Precolonial Africa .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.4.6 Postcolonial colonialism .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.4.7 Existentialism .....</b>	<b>25</b>

1.4.8 Decolonisation .....	26
1.4.9 Afrocentric New Urbanism .....	26
1.5 CONCLUSION .....	27
1.5.1 Summary .....	27
1.5.2 Structure of Thesis .....	28

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	31
2.2 CONTEXTUAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	32
2.2.1 Secondary research .....	32
2.2.2 Primary research .....	33
2.2.3 Validity and credibility .....	39
2.2.4 Ethical considerations .....	40
2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH .....	40
2.4 INVESTIGATION STRATEGIES .....	42
2.5 REGIONAL AFROCENTRIC SOURCES .....	47
2.6 AFROCENTRIC SOURCES - THE SUBURBAN CONTEXT .....	50
2.7 DEFINING AFROCENTRICITY OF CIVIC SPACES .....	52
2.8 QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY .....	54
2.9 ANTICIPATED FIELDWORK CHALLENGES .....	55
2.10 CONCLUSION .....	55

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL BASIS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF AFROCENTRIC SOURCES

3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	56
3.2 DEFINITION OF PLACEMAKING .....	57
3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF IDENTITY .....	69
3.3.1 Conceptualisation of social identity .....	71
3.3.2 Architecture as a variant of identity .....	74
3.3.3 Identity drawn from the image of the city .....	85
3.3.4 Synthesis of identity and placemaking .....	87
3.4 SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY AND BUILT FORM .....	91
3.4.1 The concept of symbolic interaction .....	93
3.4.2 Architecture reflects and expresses self .....	99
3.4.3 Architecture as a symbolic environment .....	101
3.4.4 Architecture as agency .....	107
3.5 THE AFROCENTRIC SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY .....	109



3.5.1 Defining Afrocentricity in the context of symbolism .....	110
3.5.2 Physiognomies of the African project .....	110
3.5.3 Afrocentricity and African identity .....	114
3.5.4 Maat and Afrocentric world view .....	116
3.6 CONCLUSION .....	123

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF AFROCENTRICITY IN PLACEMAKING AND BUILT FORM**

4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	124
4.2 THE AFRICAN COSMOLOGY .....	126
4.3 AFRICAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY .....	137
4.4 SPACE AND ARCHITECTURE IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA .....	147
4.4.1 Selected West African traditional civic spaces in context .....	151
4.4.2 Selected traditional architecture of East Africa .....	172
4.4.3 African art as a basis for Afrocentric placemaking .....	174
4.5 THE SQUARE AS CIVIC SPACE: A Western historical continuum .....	177
4.5.1 Historical development of a square as civic space .....	179
4.5.2 The Square from irregular to ordered civic spaces .....	180
4.5.3 Eighteenth- to Nineteenth-Century civic space designs .....	191
4.6 ARCHITECTURE AND SPACE IN COLONIAL AFRICA: Selected examples ..	196
4.6.1 Defining colonialism .....	196
4.6.2 Colonialism in Africa and its impact on built form .....	198
4.6.3 The legacy of colonial rule .....	202
4.6.4 African colonial public squares .....	205
4.6.5 Existentialism and the decolonisation agenda .....	209
4.7 AFRICAN DECOLONISATION NARRATIVE AND SPATIAL IMPERATIVES..	210
4.7.1 Defining decolonisation .....	210
4.7.2 The context of decolonisation .....	212
4.7.3 Decolonisation processes' Impact on built form .....	215
4.8 AFROCENTRICITY AND ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY .....	221
4.8.1 Afrocentric Urbanism: The Mpumalanga Legislature, Nelspruit ...	221
4.8.2 Afrocentric Architecture: The Constitutional Court of South Africa	230
4.9 CONCLUSION .....	237

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **IN SEARCH OF MTHWAKAZI'S AFROCENTRIC BUILT FORM IDENTITY: Contextual Understanding of Bulawayo (Case study)**

5.1 INTRODUCTION .....	238
5.2 THE SETTING .....	239
<b>5.2.1 Territorial distribution of tribal communities in 1980 .....</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>5.2.2 Shona Architecture .....</b>	<b>241</b>
<b>5.2.3 Great Zimbabwe: Myths and symbolism .....</b>	<b>242</b>
<b>5.2.4 Colonial architecture .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>5.2.5 The Africa Unity Square: A symbolically colonial space .....</b>	<b>262</b>
5.3 ECHOES FROM MTHWAKAZI'S PAST .....	266
<b>5.3.1 The Zulu Kingdom and architecture .....</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>5.3.2 The Warrior Nation – The Mthwakazi psyche .....</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>5.3.3 AmaNdebele settlements .....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>5.3.4 King Lobengula's Formalisation of Mthwakazi State .....</b>	<b>278</b>
5.4 MTHWAKAZI DARK AGES: Bulawayo's colonial built environment .....	282
5.5 CONCLUSION .....	301

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: The Bulawayo Civic Precinct**

6.1 INTRODUCTION .....	302
6.2 GROUNDED IN AFRICAN COSMOLOGY .....	302
<b>6.2.1 Relationship between the African mind and the cosmos .....</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>6.2.2 The increasingly loud voice of Mthwakazi restoration .....</b>	<b>308</b>
6.3 THE MAKINGS OF ISINDEBELE BUILT FORMS .....	315
<b>6.3.1 Basic tenets of isiNdebele built forms .....</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>6.3.2 The Distant Voices of Afrocentric Mthwakazi built forms .....</b>	<b>333</b>
6.4 ANALYSIS OF THE CIVIC PRECINCT .....	345
6.5 CONCLUSION .....	359

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 INTRODUCTION .....	360
7.2 AFROCENTRIC PLACEMAKING IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES:	
Contribution to knowledge.....	361
<b>7.2.1 Basis for and application of a proposed model .....</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>7.2.2 The Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) Model ...</b>	<b>364</b>
7.3 SUGGESTED FUTURE DIRECTION: CCAP knowledge model pragmatism ...	374
7.4 CONCLUSION .....	375

## **APPENDICES**

<b>I FIELWORK INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>377</b>
-------------------------------------	------------

<b>II</b>	<b>FIELDWORK RESPONSE SAMPLES .....</b>	<b>383</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>FIELDWORK PHOTO SAMPLES .....</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE .....</b>	<b>399</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>400</b>

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

## FIGURES

Page

### Chapter One

- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | Fig. 1.5.1: Summary of conceptual and theoretical framework (Author) .....            | 27 |
| 2. | Fig. 1.5.2: Thematic layout of thesis structure and case study context (Author) ..... | 29 |

### Chapter Two

- |    |  |         |
|----|--|---------|
| 3. | Fig. 2.2.1: The Mthwakazi Republic (Mthwakazi Free State). (spanish.fansshare.com. Accessed: 10/01/2017 – 15:00) ..... | 35      |
| 4. | Fig. 2.3.1: The Basic Structure of the FraiM (Adapted from Plowright, 2011: 7) .....                                   | 41      |
| 5. | Fig. 2.3.2: Embedded data mixed method framework (adapted from Cameron, 2015) .....                                    | 41      |
| 6. | Fig. 2.3.3: Strategy for fieldwork investigation and analysis. (Author) .....  | 43      |
| 7. | Fig. 2.3.4: Study areas following a traditional/rural - urban relationship.) (Author) .....                            | 43      |
| 8. | Fig. 2.3.5: Fieldwork research methods adopted (Author) .....  | 44 – 46 |

### Chapter Three

- |     |  |     |
|-----|--|-----|
| 9.  | Fig. 3.2.1: Stakeholders of the makings of a beachfront music concert as a place. (myrtlebeach.com. – Google, accessed 12 October 2015 - and illustration: Author)...  | 61  |
| 10. | Fig. 3.2.2: Placemaking factors. ( <a href="https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking">https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking</a> ) .....   | 62  |
| 11. | Fig. 3.2.3: Destination B is favorably located due to its centrality. (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 17) .....   | 64  |
| 12. | Fig. 3.2.4: Movement patterns within blocks. This stylized plan shows the three circulation meshes in James Craig's plan for Edinburgh New Town. Green arrows are 'secondary mesh', red, primary and blue tertiary. (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 19) ..... | 65  |
| 13. | Fig. 3.2.5: Urban healing through redevelopment. Whilst the second drawing show cul-de-sac that defeats the connectivity efforts which are achieved by the third drawing. (Source: Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 20) .....                                   | 65  |
| 14. | Fig. 3.2.6: Lakeshore East master Plan, Chicago, Illinois. A lively civic space animated by activities in and around a mixed-use development connected to the lakeside (Brown, et al, 2009: 159 and 160) .....   | 67  |
| 15. | Fig. 3.3.1. Identity as a social psychological mediator between input from and output in the social world. (Adapted from: Simon, 2004: 2) .....  | 73  |
| 16. | Fig. 3.3.2: West View of the Cove taken from the Rocks at the rear of the General Hospital - 1789 (Hely, 2013: 19) .....   | 76  |
| 17. | Fig. 3.3.3: Sydney Harbour in context (Google, accessed 17/11/2017) .....  | 76  |
| 18. | Fig. 3.3.4: The Sydney Opera House was built on a podium reminiscent of Mayan and Asian architecture. (Google, accessed 19/11/2017) .....  | 82  |
| 19. | Fig. 3.3.5: The roof and ground floor plan showing the kidney-shaped patio (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 81) .....   | 83  |
| 20. | Fig. 3.3.6: Conceptual drawings, including a volumetric sketch (Source- Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 154) .....  | 84  |
| 21. | Fig. 3.3.7: Five types of images of the city. (Lynch, 1960) .....  | 87  |
| 22. | Fig. 3.3.8: Site Plan – The outer wall follows the elliptical shape of the development on its rectangular block, and literally embraces the central library building (Myerson, 1996: 189) ..   | 89  |
| 23. | Fig. 3.4.1: Symbolic Interaction Processes (See Burbank and Martins, 2009: 29) .....   | 102 |
| 24. | Fig. 3.4.2: Bentham's Plan and Text for the Panopticon Penitentiary, 1787 (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 138) .....   | 104 |
| 25. | Fig. 3.5.1: Siamese crocodiles – symbol of democracy and unity (Source: Google Copyright © 2001-2007 <u>Well-Tempered Web Design</u> . Accessed 10/04/2016 – 15:10) .....  | 120 |

## FIGURES (Cont.)

Page

### Chapter Four

26.	Fig. 4.2.1: The three basic shapes that graphically summarise a methodology of how all different sciences can be taught in African Cosmology. (Imhotep, 2007: 19) .....	126
27.	Fig. 4.2.2: God is central in the African cosmology. (Imhotep, 2007: 19) .....	127
28.	Fig. 4.2.3: Movement southward of early Bantu migrants (Wills, 1985: 130) .....	128
29.	Fig. 4.2.4: The migration patterns from the Ethiopian Highlands (Google, accessed 27/6/2016) .....	129
30.	Fig. 4.2.5: The Dagara Cosmological Wheel. (Imhotep, 2007: 20) .....	129
31.	Fig. 4.2.6: The life of the Yoruba Cosmological Wheel. (Imhotep, 2007: 21) .....	130
32.	Fig. 4.2.7: Bantu-Kongo Cosmological Wheel (Imhotep, 2007: 23) .....	131
33.	Fig. 4.3.1: Kingdoms and Confederacies before the onset of Mfecane (Rasmussen, 1978: 11) .....	143
34.	Fig. 4.4.1: Bantu Migration (Collins and Burns, 2007: 49) .....	149
35.	Fig. 4.4.2: Pre-colonial African States. (Source: By Jeff Israel (ZyMOS) – Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2660560">https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2660560</a> ) .	150
36.	Fig. 4.4.3: Comparison of Cameroon houses and position of court with conceptual relational positioning of functions and spaces, both drawn to the same scale (Rapoport, 1969: 56).....	152
37.	Fig. 4.4.4: Plan of the Fali tribe compound in Northern Cameroon. (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 277) .....	154
38.	Fig. 4.4.5 – The Batamariba organic forms as informed by cosmological and symbolic influences (Yavo, 2013: 50) .....	156
39.	Fig. 4.4.6: Site Plan (Yavo, 2013: 102) .....	157
40.	Fig. 4.4.7: Berba house type showing an organic morphology (Yavo, 2013: 103) .....	158
41.	Fig. 4.4.8: West Elevation (Yavo, 2013: 104) .....	159
42.	Fig. 4.4.9: South Elevation (Yavo, 2013: 104) .....	159
43.	Fig. 4.4.10– Section E – E (Yavo, 2013: 105) .....	160
44.	Fig. 4.4.11: Section F – F (Yavo, 2013: 105) .....	160
45.	Fig. 4.4.12: Axonometric view of the Berba tata in Natta (Benin) (Yavo, 2013: 106) .....	161
46.	Fig. 4.4.13: Plan and section of Ashanti home, Ghana (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 276) .....	161
47.	Fig. 4.4.14: The Oyo Empire and the surrounding States c.1625. (By Gabagool – Own work, CC BY 3.0, <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6581387">https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6581387</a> ) .....	162
48.	Fig. 4.4.15: Ado-Ekiti – The arrangement of quarters and buildings in relation to the Oba's Palace. (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 133) .....	165
49.	4.4.16: Layout of Yoruba town of Ilorin, Western Nigeria, about 1950 (Denyer, 1979: 87) ..	165
50.	Fig. 4.4.17: The Afin of Oyo in 1937. (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 136) .....	166
51.	Fig. 4.4.18: The Afin of Oyo in 1964. (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 137) .....	167
52.	Fig. 4.4.19: The layout of the Afin Ewi in 1923 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 139) .....	168
53.	Fig. 4.4.20: The layout of the Afin Ewi in 1964 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 145) .....	169
54.	Fig. 4.4.21: Plan of a Nupe Chief's House, central Nigeria, about 1940 (Denyer, 1978: 145) .....	170
55.	Fig. 4.4.22 Plan of the Dagomba homestead, Northern Ghana, about 1965 (Denyer, 1978: 147) .....	171
56.	Fig. 4.4.23: Settlement layout of Goob Wambile. Legend. 1, 2, 3, 4, ... The order of tents by seniority and familial group; c: Camels; cf: camel foals; yc: young camels; N: naabo; m: muruubs with milk (Prussin, 1995: 152) .....	172
57.	Fig. 4.4.24: Diagram of a nabo settlement showing the centrality of the fireplace as a public space (Prussin, 1995: 153) .....	173
58.	Fig. 4.4.25: Plan of a typical Rendille tent (Prussin, 1995: 158) .....	173
59.	Fig. 4.4.26: The basic architectural structure the Rendille tent house (Prussin, 1995: 155) .....	174
60.	Fig. 4.4.27: Group of human figures reflecting size of group and dwelling (Lewis-Williams, 1983: 15) .....	175
61.	Fig. 4.4.28: A painting preserved in the South African Museum, Cape Town shows a juxtaposition of birds, therianthropes, baboon and men to reflect the ecological setting (Lewis-Williams, 1983:56) .....	175
62.	Fig. 4.5.1: St Peter's Square Plan. (Moughtin, 2003: 91) .....	178
63.	Fig. 4.5.2: The dominated/enclosed square of Santa Croce. (Moughtin, 2003: 106) .....	182
64.	Fig. 4.5.3: The Plan of the Piazza di SS. Giovanni e Paolo. (Zucker, 1966: Plate 37) .....	183
65.	Fig 4.5.4: Form of the agora integrated with the design and development of Athens as a whole. (Bacon, 1996: 52) .....	184
66.	Fig. 4.5.5: Plan showing major buildings and structures of the agora of Athens as it was in the 5th century BC (Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopaedia) .....	184
67.	Fig. 4.5.6: The evolution of Athens' amorphous agora form (Bacon, 1967: 56 – 57) .....	186
68.	Fig. 4.5.7: Assos, The agora plan and reconstruction view (Zucker, 1967: Plate 6) .....	189
69.	Fig. 4.5.8: The plan of the Roman forum. (Zucker, 1966: 50) .....	190

## FIGURES (Cont.)

	Page
70. Fig. 4.5.9: Regent Street connecting two parks – Regent’s Park at the top and St James’ Park below (Bacon, 1967: 186) .....	193
71. Fig. 4.5.10: (top): Desogn of an ideal city by Pietro di Giacomo Cataneo influenced by Vitruvius’ Roman planning principles (Bacon, 1967: 202) .....	196
72. Fig. 4.5.11: (right) – City plan of Savannah influenced by Pietro di Giacomo Cataneo city design principles (Bacon, 1967: 202) .....	196
73. Fig. 4.6.1: Baker’s sketch of the Union Buildings reflecting two rams engaging in a stalemate implying union of Afrikaners and the British (Vale, 1992: 70) (Right) .....	202
74. Fig. 4.7.1: The botanical structure of a flower provides an inspiring symbolism for Afrocentricity with respect to sculptural dimension to built form (Google search. Accessed 22/11/2018) .....	218
75. Fig. 4.8.1: Sketches showing the curved footprint and the early ideas of a domed structure .....	225
76. Fig. 4.8.2: Western elevation of the Assembly (Noble, 2011: 29) .....	226
77. Fig. 4.8.3: Part of long western elevation to offices (Noble, 2011: 50) .....	226
78. Fig. 4.8.4: Site layout of the building aligned to the contours (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 26) .....	228
79. Fig. 4.8.5: Eraly studies for the dome (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75) .....	229
80. Fig. 4.8.6: Section through the dome of the Legislature (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 37) .....	229
81. Fig. 4.8.7: Insignia of the Constitutional Court of South Africa (Noble, 2011: 120) .....	232
82. Fig. 4.8.8: Design drawing showing the relationship of the court to the city (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 15) .....	233
83. Fig. 4.8.9: The site is to eventually house Land Claims Court, the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission and a museum to house processes and history related to the birth of the Constitution. (Penguin, 2006: 95 – 96) .....	234
84. Fig. 4.8.10: the drawing showing the relationship between the Court and the Constitution Square (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 39) .....	235
85. Fig. 4.8.11: Cross-section showing the direct relationship between Constitution Square, the raised entrance podium, the foyer and the sunken well of the Court Chamber (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 63) .....	236

## Chapter Five

86. Fig. 5.2.1: The tribal communities’ composition and distribution in Zimbabwe in 1980. Note that old names are use in this illustration (Wills, 1985: 453) .....	240
87. Fig. 5.2.2: Village/Musha layout. This homestead may measure as little as 20 metres by 20 metres. (du Toit, 1981: 7) .....	241
88. Fig. 5.2.3: Plan of the Great Zimbabwe and the possible symbolic siting of the dare (social court) between the Hill Complex and the Great Enclosure (Aspinall, 2000: 136) .....	243
89. Fig. 5.2.4: Great Enclosre ((Vahosi – Female): Procreation and fertility – Architecture and space express fertility of Royal Family (Aspinall, 2000: 257) .....	244
90. Fig. 5.2.5: Pools of water are synonymous with the uterus (Aspinall, 2000: 83) .....	246
91. Fig. 5.2.6: The duality expression of unity at the Great Enclosure (Aspinall, 2000: 253) ...	247
92. Fig. 5.2.7: Mythological interpretation of the settlement as symbolic landscape and thus reflecting the symbolic interaction theory virtues (Aspianall, 2000: 165) .....	248
93. Fig. 5.2.8: Symbolisation of the hierachy between God, man and nautre (Aspinall, 2000: 254) .....	248
94. Fig. 5.2.9: Hill Complex (Mambo – Male), Protection and provision – Architecture and space express the success of the State – Man connected to God through nature and cosmology (Aspinall, 2000: 256) .....	249
95. Fig. 5.2.10: Typical plan of Zimbabwe palace. As in a typical Shona dwelling the chikuva is at the back (Swart et al, 1986: 10) .....	250
96. Fig. 5.2.11: The Six Zimbabwe Birds discovered in the Eastern Enclosure – (Swart et al, 1987: 17) .....	251
97. Fig. 5.2.12: Phallic birds with woman’s legs and buttocks. (Nyamutswa, 2017: 198) .....	251
98. Fig. 5.2.13: The analytical Plan of the Great Enclosure as an initiation and circumcision nerve centre. (Nyamutswa, 2017: 207) .....	252
99. Fig. 5.2.14: Artist impression of circumcision area. (Nyamutswa, 2017: 211) .....	253
100. Fig. 5.2.15: Onset of colonial occupation of Central Africa (Wills, 1985: 176) .....	256
101. Fig. 5.2.16: The temporary shelters built by Settlers along Pioneer Street. (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 3) .....	257
102. Fig. 5.2.17: Fig. 5.2.17: Harare, as is in 2015. A – General layout and B – City Centre (White, Pienaar, Serfontein, 2015: 95). .....	258
103. Fig. 5.2.18: The foundation of the first brick building in Harare was laid on 8 August 1893 (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 9) .....	259

## FIGURES (Cont.)

	Page
104. Fig. 5.2.19: Broadway House with its original cupola, a far cry from Shona traditional architecture (Jack, Cobban, and Williams: 16) .....	260
105. Fig. 5.2.20: The Rhodes statue stood in front of the Government offices (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 87) .....	261
106. Fig. 5.2.21: Modernist architecture dominates First Street (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 78) .	261
107. Fig. 5.2.22: The Roman Catholic cathedral fronting a civic space claimed its identity in the city (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 105) .....	262
108. Fig. 5.2.23: Africa Unity Square in context (White, Pienaar, Serfontein, 2015: 95) .....	263
109. Fig. 5.3.1: The Mfecane Wars and the Rise of Ndebele Kingdom, 1818 - 35. (Source: Shillington, 1995: 261) .....	268
110. Fig. 5.3.2 - A Typical Zulu Settlement layout (as in King Dingane's uMgungundlovu and Cetshwayo's Ulundi) Source: Shillington, 1995: 261) .....	268
111. Fig. 5.3.3: A demonstrative illustration of a Zulu village (umuzi). Circular or oval in plan with a large enclosure. 1. – cattle enclosure. 2. – Chief's hut. 3. – Chief's wife quarters. 4. – store houses. 5. Goat kraal. 6. Main entrance. (Google, accessed 22/12/2017) .....	269
112. Fig. 5.3.4: Hierarchy of power in Ndebele State (Adapted from: Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dec, 2008: 382) .....	271
113. Fig. 5.3.5 - Movement of the Ndebele Kingdom into Present day Zimbabwe (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 58) .....	273
114. Fig. 5.3.6 - Mzilikazi's Royal Settlement of eGabeni, as depicted by William Cornwallis Harris, 1836 (Source: William Cornwallis Harris 2 April 1807 (baptised) - 9 October 1848) - "Stamme & Ryke", deur J.S. Bergh, in Samewerking met A.P. Bergh. Don Nelson: Kaapstad. 1984 (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Accessed 22 August, 2016: 3:50pm) .....	274
115. Fig. 5.3.7: Typical plan of amaNdebele Town (Adapted from: Summers and Pagden, 1970: 38)	275
116. Fig. 5.3.8: A sketch of chest-horns tactics (adapted from: Summers and Pagden, 1970: 57) ..	276
117. Fig. 5.3.9: Bulawayo town layout showing cattle enclosure, in the 1890s. (Source: Shillington, 1995: 263) .....	278
118. Fig. 5.3.10: The Mthwakazi boundaries established by King Lobengula before the invasion of Mthwakazi territory in 1893 by the British colonialists. (Google Maps, accessed November 2017) .....	280
119. Fig 5.4.1: The Ndebele settlements in the nineteenth century (Bhebe, 1977, 38) .....	283
120. Fig. 5.4.2: The Inyathi Mission founded by Robert Moffat in Matabeleland in about 1862 (Rasmussen, 1977: 42) .....	284
121. Fig. 5.4.3: The house built for Lobengula by John Halyet at Old Bulawayo about fifteen miles south of the present-day City, near Old Criterion Mine, shows the early influences of Western built forms on amaNdebele's way of life of the 1880s. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: vi)	284
122. Fig. 5.4.4: An artist impression of Hope Fountain Mission as looked at in 1890. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 3) .....	285
123. Fig. 5.4.5: Showing Mr W. J. Wallenstein, editor of Bulawayo's first newspaper, <i>The Matebele</i>	
124. <i>Times</i> , on his horse with the typical pole and udaka, semi-permanent buildings erected on the first site of "white" Bulawayo. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 4) .....	286
125. Fig. 5.4.6: General Plan of Bulawayo Township, 1895 – 1896 (Ranger, 2010: 18) .....	288
126. Fig. 5.4.7 – Bulawayo Commonage area before the development of townships. (Ranger, 2010: 19) .....	289
127. Fig. 5.4.8: Makokoba as it appeared in 1970 (Ranger, 2010: 21) .....	290
129. Fig. 5.4.9: Bulawayo and the Location to the West in the 1960s (Ranger, 2010: 20) .....	291
130. Fig. 5.4.10: Bulawayo and the Western Commonage in 2010 (Ranger, 2010: 22) .....	292
131. Fig. 5.4.11: View into Dr J M Nkomo Street (Main Street) between 6 <sup>th</sup> Avenue and Leopold Takawira Street (Selbourne Avenue) (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 11) .....	293
132. Fig. 5.4.12: View along Dr J. M. Nkomo (Main) Street between 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> Avenues in the 1920s showing a rugged silhouetted skyline introduced by The Empire Theatre, Albany House <i>et al.</i> This is the east side on a south to north view towards the statue of Cecil John Rhodes. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 85) .....	294
133. Fig. 5.4.13: The Charter House is generally in a shade of pink with roof-top canopy lending it to a landmark at that end L. Takawira (Selbourne) Avenue. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 115) .....	295
134. Fig. 5.4.14: The Tredgold viewed towards the Post Office and Compensation House. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 116) .....	296
135. Fig. 5.4.15: The High Court with its classical features and copper dome – the only dome in Bulawayo terminates the view along 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 118) .....	297

## FIGURES (Cont.)

	Page
136. Fig. 5.4.16: Various religious buildings covering Jewish Temples, Hindu Temples, Cathedrals and Mosques dotted around Bulawayo Central Business District. (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 135). Photo montage (Author) .....	298
137. Fig. 5.4.17: The multi-storey complex that comprised the Ascot Centre was to be the centre of entertainment in the Eastern suburbs around a race course (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 149) .....	299
138. Fig. 5.4.18: The proposed design with three towers with the race course in the background – a statement of modernity (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 149) (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 148) .....	300

### Chapter Six

139. Fig. 6.2.1 (above): Gravity and Newton's Laws of motion (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2012: 42)	305
140. Fig. 6.2.2: A circle as prime generator of African built forms. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 33)	306
141. Fig. 6.2.3: A Spiral representing an infinite series of circles. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 34)	307
142. Fig. 6.3.1: Fieldwork – Areas in Matebeleland and part of Midlands that were visited by the author (Author, Google) .....	317
143. Fig. 6.3.2: Sample One - a homestead in rural Matabeleland (Author and Viloshin Govender) .....	318
144. Fig. 6.3.3: Sample Two - a homestead in rural Matabeleland (Author and Viloshin Govender) .....	327
145. Fig. 6.3.4: Sample Three of a homestead in rural Matabeleland – Inyathi shwoeing homestead plan, and views A, B, C, D and E (Author and Viloshin Govender) .....	329
146. Fig. 6.3.5: Sample Four – Appendix II showing the general compound layout with a rectilinear perimeter fence (Top) (Author and Thando Nyathi) .....	331
147. Fig. 6.3.6: Sample Four – Appendix II showing the general compound layout with an rectilinear perimeter fence (Left) (Author and Thando Nyathi) .....	331
148. Fig. 6.3.7: Sample 4 – Appendix II, an isiNdebele dwelling (Top) (Author and Thando Nyathi)....	331
149. Fig. 6.3.8: Appendix II showing the general compound layout with organic perimeter fence. The key is the same as in Fig. 6.3.6 (Author and Thando Nyathi) .....	332
150. Fig. 6.3.9: Appendix II showing the general compound layout with an organic perimeter fence (Author and Thando Nyathi) .....	332
151. Fig. 6.3.10 A, B, C, D: General conceptual domains of an isiNdebele homestead. (Author) ..	333
152. Fig. 6.3.11- NUST Master Plan (Google: Mwamuka and Mercuri Design Report – accessed on 14 March 2018) .....	337
153. Fig. 6.3.12: The King addressing his Chiefs with the tree providing a landmark as a meeting place (Adapted by author) .....	339
154. Fig. 6.3.13: The Second proposed scheme of the Mayor's Residence: site Plan (Mthethwa, 2011: 170) .....	341
155. Fig. 6.3.14: The plan and elevations of the proposed scheme (Mthethwa, 2011: 170) .....	341
156. Fig. 6.3.15: The integration of building forms and circulation (Mthethwa, 2011: 227) .....	343
157. Fig. 6.3.16: A perspective view of the proposed Mayoral Residence (Mthethwa, 2011: 234)	343
158. Fig. 6.3.17: The proposed Mayoral Residence plan with its chest-horns formation (Mthethwa, 2011: 219) .....	344
159. Fig. 6.4.1: The Bulawayo Civic Centre in context (Adapted from Google 9/2/2018 .....	346
160. Fig. 6.4.2 A, B, C, D, E: Superimposition of conceptual traditional isiNdebele homestead planning on the Civic Centre (Author) .....	352
161. Fig. 6.4.3: Views in and around the precinct (Author) .....	353
162. Fig. 6.4.4: An Artist impression of the Tower Block, Revenue Hall and the building on the foreground of far left where the Automobile Association is currently housed was never built to this design proposal (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 150) .....	356

### Chapter Seven

163. Fig. 7.2.1: Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) Knowledge Model – identifying areas that are considered to be Afrocentric sources – cosmos, ecology, cultural practices and expertise within individuals and communities (Author) .....	365
164. Fig. 7.2.2: Proposed future trends applied on Bulawayo Civic Centre as informed by Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) (Author and Google maps) .....	366
165. Fig. 7.2.3: African moral campus on female genitalia did not allow the proliferation of nudity art (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2017: 66) .....	367



## FIGURES (Cont.)

	Page
166. Fig. 7.2.4: Chinese New Town (SAA Architects) Klaus Philipsen, FAIA <u>What is Urban Design?</u> , 28th November 2014 (Google search: accessed 12/10/2018) .....	371
167. Fig. 7.2.5: 2017 Indiana Grown Monumental Marketplace (Google search: accessed 12/10/2018: 14:38) .....	371
168. Fig. 7.2.6: The 3-D urban design massing of the proposed Centrum site project showing circular design with civic buildings at the core (M.Arch 1 Advanced Architectural Design Reports, UKZN, 2010).....	372
169. Fig. 7.2.7: Centrum Site Master with a tidal pool forming the focus of the circular design. (M.Arch 1 Advanced Architectural Design Reports, UKZN, 2010) .....	373

## PLATES

	Page
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
1. Plate 3.2.1: Busy Streets in Harajuku, Japan showing how people turn spaces into places through engaging in diverse activities. (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 15) .....	63
2. Plate 3.2. 2: Areal view of Liverpool One (L) – an award-winning scheme built on the edge of the city centre providing a mixture of retail, leisure, commercial and residential facilities. Views into the street showing retail and leisure terrace (R). (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 21) .	66
3. Plate 3.2.3: Illustration of Kevin Lynch's paths and landmarks .....	68
4. Plate 3.3.1: The Sydney Opera House on the Cove (Google, accessed, 17/11/2017 .....	76
5. Plate 3.3.2: Virtual Sydney Harbour: Its virtual natural state (Google, accessed 17/11/2017)	76
6. Plate 3.3.3: Virtual contemporary Sydney Harbour, (Google, accessed 17/11/2017).....	76
7. Plate 3.3.4: A view into the Sydney Harbour and The Bennelong Point (Google, accessed 17/11/2017) .....	80
8. Plate 3.3.5: A view into the Sydney Harbour and The Harbour Bridge from within the Sydney Opera House (Google, accessed 19/11/2017) .....	82
9. Plate 3.3.6 - View of the kidney-shaped internal courtyard of a housing project in Seville, Spain (Tzonis, and Lefaivre, 1992: 82) .....	83
10. Plate 3.3.7 - View into the Library entrance the Tampere Main Library (Source - Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 153.) .....	85
11. Plate 3.3.8: View of the Vancouver Library square (Myerson, 1996: 188) .....	88
12. Plate 3.3.9: The aerial view of the scheme revealing four tiered, colonnaded, elliptical wall. A federal government building with similar aesthetics was part of this project thus creating a truly civic precinct (Myerson, 1996: 189) .....	89
13. Plate 3.3.10: Inside the glass-covered mall-like arcade the light pours into reading spaces thus creating a unique civic spatial experience (Myerson, 1996: 191) .....	90
14. Plate 3.4.1: Michael Arad's World Trade Centre Memorial, 'Reflecting Absence. by Michael Arad and Peter Walker. (Gibson, 15 Sep, 2011) .....	100
15. Plate 3.4.2: Winning Design for the World Trade Center Memorial: Reflecting Absence, (Gibson, 15 Sep, 2011) .....	100
16. Plate 3.4.3 Interior Design for the World Trade Center Memorial Competition Entrée by Norman Lee and Michael Lewis: Votives in Suspension, by Norman Lee and Michael Lewis. (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 128) .....	100
17. Fig. 3.4.4: Bentham's Plan and Text for the Panopticon Penitentiary, 1787 (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 138) .....	104
18. Plate 3.4.5: U.S. Capitol (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 140) .....	105
19. Plate 3.4.6: Portland, Oregon, Municipal Building: (Source: Smith and Bugni, 2006: 142)	106
20. Plate 3.4.7: Coloured Interior spaces to evoke various feelings: (Source: Google: Coloured spaces. Accessed 7/10/2016 – 16:40Hrs) .....	107
21. Plate 3.4.8: Stonehenge: A World Heritage Site (Source: Smith and Bugni, 2006: 143) .....	108
<b>Chapter Four</b>	
22. Plate 4.4.1: Cylindrical granary, Yenegandougou, Ivory Coast .....	155

## PLATES (Cont.)

	Page
23. Plate 4.4.2: The Ife Head on display at the British Museum. (Source: By, Sailko, CC BY-SA3.0, <a href="https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14783256">https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14783256</a> ) .....	163
24. Plate 4.4.3: Dagomba homestead, northern Ghana, about 1970 (Denyer, 1978: 147) .....	171
25. Plate 4.4.4: The Democratic Republic of Congo's Baluba head-rest (left) – showing embrace - and stool - showing communality (Segy, 1958: 104, 105) .....	176
26. Plate 4.5.1: View into the Square with Bernini's obelisk erected in 1586 (Moughtin, 2003: 92) .....	178
27. Plate 4.5.2: View out from the square. (Moughtin, 2003: 92) .....	178
28. Plate 4.5.3: The Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, with all main views leading to it (Moughtin, 2003: 106) .....	182
29. Plate 4.5.4: View into the Piazza di SS. Giovanni E. Paolo showing the Verrocchio's Colleoni monument (Zucker, 1966: Plate 37) .....	183
30. Plate 4.5.5: Architecture interlocking two historic bding through space and time – The Temple of Hephaisteion and the Parthenon (Seen through the last opening on the right) (Bacon, 1967: 54) .....	185
31. Plate 4.5.6: View of the ancient agora. The Temple of Hephaisteion is to the left and the Stoa of Attalos to the right. (Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopaedia) .....	188
32. Plate. 4.5.7: An example of a square that is overtaken by its size and thus fails to work as a single unit (Zucker, 1966: Plate 72) .....	191
33. Plate 4.5.8: Curvilinear forms used to encircle the green spaces (Bacon, 1967: 187) .....	194
34. Plate 4.5.9: Church of Saint Marylebone providing a closing frame to a civic outdoor space. (Bacon, 1966: 191) .....	195
35. Plate 4.6.1: The classical image of the Union Buildings marking the union of the British and Afrikaners (Google – Accessed 14 December 2017) (Top) .....	200
36. Plate 4.6.2: Aerial photo – Church Square (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 14:00) .....	206
37. Plate 4.6.3: The Verenigde Kerk building (1885-1905) was the third to grace the square (Google, accessed 23/4/18) .....	207
38. Plate 4.6.4: View to the North of Church Square towards the Old ZAR Legislative Building (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 16:00) .....	207
39. Plate 4.6.5: A woman stature atop the Raadsaal (Labuschagne, 1981: 15) .....	208
40. Plate 4.6.6: Paul Kruger's bronze statue completed in 1889 in Rome and finally unveiled in 1954 (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 14:37) .....	208
41. Plate 4.7.1: Plate 4.7.1: South Entrance, showing the square in front of the building (Herz, 2015: 432) .....	216
42. Plate 4.7.2: Approaching KICC from the North, the main public plaza sits in the front of the main entrance (Herz, 2015: 433) .....	216
43. Plate 4.7.3: View of the city centre from Uhuru Park, with the KICC Tower dominating the Nairobi cityscape (Herz, 2015: 433) .....	217
44. Plate 4.7.4: The KICC exudes a truly tropical ambience at dusk (Herz, 2015: 436 - 437) ....	217
45. Plate 4.7.5: (Top Left): The Amphitheater is named after the Architect – Karl Henrik Nostvik. (Herz, 2015: 441) .....	217
46. Plate 4.7.6: (Top): The entrance area consists of a zone of ramps, exterior galleries, fountains and vertical gardens, creating an interstitial zone between inside and outside (Herz, 2015: 435).....	217
47. Plate 4.7.7: (Right): The KICC is a national and iconic independence symbol that attracts parties of school children and also a popular tourist attraction with the civic space in front of main entrance. (Herz, 2015: 440) .....	218
48. Plate 4.7.8: The protea flower that is African and a national emblem for South Africa that could be easily linked to the form of the Kenya International Conference Centre (Google search. Accessed 22/11/2018) .....	219
49. Plate 4.7.9: Approaching the closed-flower-shaped amphitheatre from the South (Herz, 2015: 441) .....	220
50. Plate 4.7.10: The entrance area is a series of ramps, exterior galleries, vertical gardens and fountains to capture the West African country's Tropical country scene (Herz, 2015: 434) .....	220
51. Plate 4.8.1: Mpumalanga legislature- view from inside the sweeping forecourt (Google Search. Accessed 22/11/2018) .....	222
52. Plate 4.8.2: Granite kopjes of the veld around Nelspruit (Noble, 2001: 10) .....	223
53. Plate 4.8.3: Note the similarity between this Dome of the Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature building and the granite outcrops (Noble, 2001: 10) .....	223
54. Plate 4.8.4: Aerial photograph showing the location of the Mpumalanga Legislature and its relative position to the Riverside Mall and Casino (Google, accessed: 28/11/2017) .....	224
55. Plate 4.8.5: Shade nets, pergolas, light wells, were useful with respect to integrating parking into the building (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 50) .....	226
56. Plate 4.8.6: (left) – Cobelled parabollic stone dome by 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Karoo settlers (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75) .....	229

## PLATES (Cont.)

	Page
57. Plate 4.8.7: Children gathering underneath a tree. (Google – Accessed 23/11/2017) .....	232
58. Plate 4.8.8: Typical gathering space for meetings in most traditional Africam communities (Google, accessed 23/11/2017) .....	232
59. Plate 4.8.9: The urban context of the Constitutional Hill (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 15) .....	232

### Chapter Five

60. Plate 5.2.1: Predominantly cone on the drum forms. (du Toit, 1981: 7) .....	242
61. Plate 5.2.2: Sacred Enclosure showing the men's circumcision bench and the narrow channel leading to drains and soakaways (Nyamutswa, 2017: 210) .....	253
62. Plate 5.2.3: A replica of the original Conical Tower built by Cosmas Nyamutswa at his Borrowdale house in Harare (Nyamutswa, 2017: i) .....	254
63. Plate 5.2.4: The influence of The Union Jack in the design of the Africa Unity Square (Charamba and Nhambura, 28 March 2018) .....	263
64. Plate 5.2.5: The St Mary's Cathedral, Harare. Located NW of Africa Unity Square. (Google, 28/3/2018) .....	264
65. Plate 5.2.6: View to the SE of Africa Unity Square towards the Meikles Hotel. (Google, 28/3/2018) .....	264
66. Plate 5.2.7: View to towards the fountain in the middle of Africa Unity Square. (Google, 28/3/2018) .....	265
67. Plate 5.3.1: Sir Leander Starr Jameson whom the Jameson Line is named after. (Maphenduka, June 2018: 1) .....	279
68. Plate 5.4.1: The High Court provides vistas to 8 <sup>th</sup> Avenue. (Source: Google Maps, 31/03/2016 – 18:50) .....	297

### Chapter Six

69. Plate 6.2.1: Blooming Jacaranda trees in spring. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 7) .....	304
70. Plate 6.2.2: Leafless Jacarandas in winter (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 7) .....	304
71. Plate 6.2.3: Phases of the moon expressing repetition; Rebirth, growth and development, death, rebirth. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 10) .....	305
72. Plate 6.2.4 (Left): Planetary bodies' movement - artistic expressions are repositories of Africans worldview (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 11) .....	305
73. Plate 6.2.5: Typical Kalanga huts form. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2012: 37) .....	306
74. Plate 6.2.6: A Spiral representing an infinite series of circles (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 82) .....	307
75. Plate 6.2.7: The Milky Way (umthala) (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 85) .....	307
76. Plate 6.2.8: Whorls (umoya) on Ndebele baskets. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 86) .....	307
77. Plate 6.2.9: HIM Mzilikazi II confronted by heavy armoured Zimbabwe Police vehicles preventing the celebration .of his coronation on the 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2017. (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group) .....	312
78. Plate 6.2.10: The King's Followers being dispersed by the Zimbabwe Riot Police (On the 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2017. (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group) ..	312
79. Plate 6.2.11: HIM King Mzilikazi II and The Queen during one of their public excursions in September 2017. (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group) .....	312
80. Plate 6.2.12: Crown Prince Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo at the iNduna uNyangazonke Ndiweni's Residence after a failed coronation of 3 March 2018 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group) .....	313
81. Plate 6.2.13: Crown Prince Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo at the iNduna uNyangazonke Ndiweni's Residence after a failed coronation of 3 March 2018 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group) .....	313
82. Plate 6.3.1: The thinking man: A statue displayed at the Municipal Civic Precinct grounds (Author) .....	316
83. Plate 6.3.2: View towards homestead entrance – On your left inside the homestead is the place of arrival (Author) .....	319
84. Plate 6.3.3: View of the place of arrival – inkundla/idade (Sanele Mkhwanazi) .....	320
85. Plate 6.3.4: Decorated verandah window (author) .....	320
86. Plate 6.3.5: A kitchen/umkulu is usually the most decorated with a feminine civic space in front of it. In some instances the space is bounded by a short wall (Author) .....	321
87. Plate 6.3.6: Plate 6.3.8: <i>Umsamo</i> is the interior rear space of a kitchen were kitchen utensils are stored (Author) .....	321
88. Plate 6.3.7: Display of an array of utensil and artefacts (Sanele) .....	322
89. Plate 6.3.8: Decorated exterior of houses around the homestead (Respondent, Author) ..	322

## PLATES (Cont.)

	Page
90. Plate 6.3.9: The kitchen (A), covered cooking area (B) and open cooking area (C) (Author) .....	323
91. Plate 6.3.10: Of interest here is the rocky terrain of the Matopo hills (Sanele) .....	323
92. Plate 6.3.11: A homestead tucked between boulders of the Matopo with the Njelele in the background (Author) .....	324
93. Plate 6.3.12: <i>Isibaya</i> with its palisaded perimeter – usually located in the male outdoor domain (Author) .....	325
94. Plate 6.3.13: An ancestral beast (Inkomo yamadlozi) (Google, accessed 23/7/2017) .....	326
95. Plate 6.3.14: View into the public entrance of a palisaded homestead in rural Matabeleland (Author) .....	328
96. Plate 6.3.15: A rectilinear hut showing an independent wall structure (Author) .....	328
97. Plate 6.3.16: View to the entrance that was influenced by access road (Author) .....	330
98. Plate 6.3.17: View from the “back” of the homestead to inkundla/idade (Author) .....	330
99. Plate 6.3.18: The Harare International Airport with its Observation Tower mimicking the Great Zimbabwe’s Conical Tower thus recalling the glory of precolonial Shona history. (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 13:30) .....	334
100. Plate 6.3.19: The Harare International Airport with its Observation Tower showing the decorative elements found at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 14:00 .....	334
101. Plate 6.3.20: The Bulawayo’s Dr Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Airport entrance showing form and materiality unresponsive to local Mthwakazi cultures (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 14:00 .....	334
102. Plate 6.3.21: The Bulawayo’s Dr Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo’s observation Tower is a simple functional element and no more with further emphasis on rectilinearity .....	334
103. Plate 6.3.22: Potential sources of Afrocentric placemaking and architectural inspiration (Google, accessed 27/11/2018) .....	331
104. Plate 6.3.23: The Shona headrest (Africa Direct, 2017, Google, accessed 27/11/2018) .....	332
105. Plate 6.3.24: The Mhlahlandlela Government Complex designed by Vengesayi Architects – view to the vehicular entrance (Source: Google. Accessed 18/9/2016) .....	335
106. Plate 6.3.25: The Mhlahlandlela Government Complex located in the vicinity of the High Court Building and a major transport node both to the general north of this site. (Source: Google. Accessed 18/9/2016) .....	336
107. Plate 6.3.26: View into the Great Hall and the East Wing of the Administration Block with the Vice Chancellor’s Office on the top left hand side with a protruding circular form (Google Maps, 14/03/2018: 09:58 CAT) .....	339
108. Plate 6.3.27: The Faculty of Commerce Building (Google Maps, 15/03/2018: 15:58 CAT) ...	340
109. Plate 6.3.28: The protruding glass pyramid on a staircase was the language used throughout to emphasize on seeing and being seen. (Google Maps, 15/03/2018: 15:42 CAT, Tatenda Mpofu – Photo taken July 2017 .....	340
110. Plate 6.3.29: The Site plan of the Proposed Bulawayo Mayoral Residence project (Google Maps, Accessed 20/3/2018) .....	342
111. Plate 6.3.30: View to the West – The CBD (Mthethwa, 2011: 168) .....	342
112. Plate 6.3.31: View to the North from the site: NUST (Mthethwa, 2011: 168) .....	342
113. Plate 6.4.1: The City Hall. View from the western end entrance into Council Chambers (Author) .....	347
114. Plate 6.4.2: A colourful market stretch for carvings and various curios for local and international tourists (A – in Fig. 6.4.1) (Author, June 2018) .....	348
115. Plate 6.4.3: City residents taking a quiet rest in the shade in landscaped outdoors of the City Hall Grounds. (Author, June 2018) .....	349
116. Plate 6.4.4: View into sitting areas .....	349
117. Plate 6.4.5: The perimeter fencing around the City Hall (Author, June 2018) .....	
118. Plate 6.4.6: A homestead showing a transparent perimeter fence – a pallisade .....	350
119. Plate 6.4.7 A, B, C, D: Comparative entrance and resting places around the City Hall (A and C) (Google, accessed 20/7/2018) and a traditional homestead in Tsholotsho in rural Mthwakazi (B and D) (Author, May 2017; June 2018) .....	351
120. Plate 6.4.8 A, B, C, D: Undesignated sitting areas in and around the Civic Precinct. These show lack of provision for placemaking elements. (Author) .....	354
121. Plate 6.4.9: Man playing mbira – a musical instrument. C – in Fig. 6.4.9. (Author) .....	355
122. Plate 6.4.10: Besides the “Thinking man”, there are solar lighting structures that have been added to the landscape (Author) .....	355
123. Plate 6.4.11: The finely balanced rocks have a considerable psyche on Mthwakazi residents (Google, accessed 20 July 2018) .....	356
124. Plate 6.4.12: The hilly Matopo with its characteristic boulders with a dam, the informant’s brainchild with the help of international donors (Sanele Mkhwananzi) .....	356

## PLATES (Cont.)

	Page
125. Plate 6.4.13: Northern entrance into the City Hall. Outdoor space clearly designed for vehicular access with no provision for public resting areas .....	357

### Chapter Seven

126. Plate 7.2.1 A, B: The (above) Kudu in the wild (Google search, accessed 18/11/2018 at 17:35; Getaway magazine, November 1997 and <a href="http://pinetreeweb.com/kudu.htm">http://pinetreeweb.com/kudu.htm</a> ) .....	368
127. Plate 7.2.2: A kudu horn trophy (C) and the Mode-Gakuen Spiral Towers in Nagoya, Japan (D). One can consider the design to be inspired by the form, historical and cultural context of the kudu horn form. (Pinterest, received Friday 16 November 2018) ...	368
128. Plate 7.2.3: (L) The Cobra Tower in Kuwait imitating intimacy and violence – symbolising the good and the evil that confounds the living in an Afrocentric cosmology (Pinterest, received Friday 16 November 2018) .....	369
129. Plate 7.2.4: (R) Snakes entangled in a duel of violence and intimacy (Goggle Search. Accessed 19/11/2018) .....	369
130. Plate: 7.2.5: The Moscow Fashion Palace took cue from fashion, dance, art, Russian culture and femininity and delivered through skin and bones philosophy (Pinterest, received Friday 16 November 2018) .....	370
131. Plate: 7.2.6: Due emphasis given to the proportions of breasts and hip to emphasis fertility. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2017: 67) .....	370
132. Plate 7.2.7: Aerial view of Durban CBD shwoing the Centrum site. (Author, Google maps, accessed 15/10/2018 at 12:47pm) .....	372

## TABLES

	Page
<b>Chapter One</b>	
1. Table 1.1.1: Zimbabwe – History of Land Policy 1889–1979 (Codesria, 33 - 64 <a href="http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/003-the_historical_context01.pdf?24248/116cfae91841d8ae4004c15a35ceacfb411e621">http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/003-the_historical_context01.pdf?24248/116cfae91841d8ae4004c15a35ceacfb411e621</a> ; 09/07/2015 00:19:08) .....	4

### Chapter Four

2. Table 4.3.1: General types of traditional African political structures (Adopted from: Ayittey, 2006: 110) .....	140
--	-----

### Chapter Six

3. Table 6.4.1: Informants ages in and around the Civic Centre (Author) .....	353
4. Table 6.4.2: Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) scores are averages of selected informants. How would you rank the Civic Centre space against <i>inkundla/idade</i> or fireplace in a traditional isiNdebele homestead planning with respect to the given elements and constructs? Rate elements (1 = very poor and 10 = Excellent) (Author).....	354

### Chapter Seven

5. Table 7.2.1: Basis of justification of proposed future built environment trends based on Afrocentric placemaking (Author) .....	361
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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.1 Background

This study's conceptual point of departure is that of creating built environments that are reflective of contemporary placeness or *genius loci* whose identity is driven by contextual phenomena so as to create a sense of belonging among users. In short, it is a search for a built form that reflects self, self being the perceived centre of human beings, individually and collectively. The study's main thrust is that of African built environments, most of which have a European colonial background and are thus alien to local cultures and traditions. It is argued that current built environments in African contexts are not reflective of the African as a centre, individually and collectively. The worst kind of colonialism is that of cultural domination which borders on regionalism and tribalism and this is the case in most of contemporary Africa. Africa is still predominantly defined by the colonial boundaries set by the Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa (de Blij and Muller, 2003) which was premised on European superiority and Africans' lack of participation in determining their destiny. This is the root cause of locals' alienation from their built environment. Decolonisation aims to de-alienate locals from their built form by creating built environments that are grounded in indigenous inhabitants' value systems. This calls for the re-establishing a collective centre in built environments.

Decolonisation is intended to be the point of entry to create a dialogue between colonialism and contemporary local lifestyles and aspirations in postcolonial countries. Given that the city is a physical reflection of the interplay between dominant and subjugated cultural identities, it is the focus of this research.

Most postcolonial countries have struggled to deal with local identity issues at the political, social and architectural levels. Identity can be considered to be a coalescence of mutually responsive, if sometimes conflicting, modes of conduct, habits of thought, and patterns of evaluation; in short, a coherent human social psychology (Appiah, 1995). On a more pragmatic note, Lewinson (2007: 199 - 215) uses the example of postcolonial Dar es Salaam to argue that through uses of space and social practices, contemporary Africans are constructing socially connected, culturally multifaceted lives in their built environments. In the twenty-first century, there is a conscious effort to search for a direction in Afrocentric placemaking. This study identifies Afrocentric placemaking elements in and around the Mthwakazi Nation's Bulawayo from rural settlements through to modern urban settlements with specific reference to Bulawayo's Civic Precinct and its environs. Focusing on civic spaces involves a search for a collective centre in built environments. The identified traditional placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources such as rural to urban settlements, culture, language, history etc., would then be deployed in design processes as part of creating an Afrocentric identity that contributes to the decolonisation of built environments on the continent.

Some approaches to the concept of identity are embedded in the evolution of social theories:

[C]onceptions of identity arising from modernist theory accepted a degree of fluidity in the construction of identity. The concept of identity as fixed by ethnicity and race has been rejected by modernist thinking, and thus identity was [defined] in terms of relatively few [...] factors (public and private social worlds) and relatively fixed social processes such as modernisation. Various post-modernist theories take this flexibility even further, by arguing that identity is fluid and not fixed, that it is constructed in far more complex ways, and that many factors can contribute to its construction.

(Mthethwa, 2011: 59 - 60)

The twin social concepts of decolonisation and identity provide the basis for the identification of appropriate placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources (real or abstract) and how they can contribute to contemporary and collectively centred built environments through designing civic spaces in African contexts with a focus on Bulawayo.

Civic spaces play a key role in creating a collectively centred built environments due to their impact beyond their fixed geographical location. This calls for an examination of other architectural and urban design concepts in the social sciences such as Symbolic Interaction theory, Afrocentricity and Existential theory as tools for the decolonisation of African cities. Bulawayo's Civic Centre is used as a vehicle to test the study's discourse due to city's traditional/monarchical foundation with a traceable history. Within these theories lie theories such as cultural identity and critical regionalism which can be derived from identity conceptualisation in the broader sense.

Civic spaces are of primary concern in this study, especially how they radiate their collectively centred identity. They encompass squares, streets, and other privileges of way, whether predominantly residential, or commercial, community/civic uses; open spaces and parks; and public/private spaces where access is unhampered (Carmorna, De Magalhaes and Hammond, 2008: 5).

Public space will also be viewed as an outdoor place that can be employed as a tool for symbolism. Outside space has been used as an aesthetic and symbolic tool since the Middle Ages, as a direct impact of military and economic strength (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003). The street is an integral part of cities' civic spaces and can be used to achieve a sense of community, place and identity within the urban context (Greenberg, 2007: 11).

### **1.1.2 Justification for the study**

Most African built environments were created to accommodate colonial interests and lifestyles and, in some instances, the local population was prohibited from inhabiting certain sections of towns, cities and even the countryside. South Africa's Group Areas Act of 1950 is an infamous example. This Act was a powerful tool for the apartheid state to control the use, occupation and ownership of land and buildings and enforce racial segregation (Smith, 1992: 75). Early European architecture in South Africa was associated with settler colonialism which was widely reflected in the building of colonial towns, commercial buildings, houses, churches, railway stations, and mining centres as a series of reproductions and deviations of European aesthetic themes (Demissie, 2004: 488).



In Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) similar discriminatory legislation such as the Land Apportionment Act (1930) and National Land Husbandry Act (1941) (Palmer, 1977; Moyana, 1984) drove African people from their rightful land (see Table 1.1.1).

Year	Land Act / Commission	Purpose	Result
1889	The Lippert concession	White settlers to acquire land rights from Native Zimbabweans	British South African Company (BSAC) buys concession and uses it as a basis for land appropriation
1898	Native Reserves Order in Council	To create Native Reserves in the face of mass land appropriation by white settlers	Native reserves created haphazardly in infertile, low-rainfall potential areas and which subsequently become communal areas.
1930	Land apportionment Act	To separate land between black and white people	The high-potential areas become white large-scale privately owned farms.
1951	Native Land Husbandry Act	To enforce private ownership of land, destocking and conservation practices on (TTLs)black small-holders	Mass resistance to legislation fuelling nationalistic politics. Law scrapped in 1961.
1965	Tribal Trust Land (TTL) Act	To change the name of Native Reserves and create trustees for the land	Because of population pressure, TTLs became degraded 'homelands'.
1969	Land Tenure Act	To replace the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and finally divide land 50% white and 50% black	Combined with the TTL Act, Rhodesia had the equivalent of apartheid.

**Table 1.1: Zimbabwe – History of Land Policy 1889–1979 (Codesria, 33 - 64**

[http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/003-the\\_historical\\_context01.pdf?4248/116cfae91841d8ae4004c15a35ceacfb411e621](http://www.codesria.org/IMG/pdf/003-the_historical_context01.pdf?4248/116cfae91841d8ae4004c15a35ceacfb411e621); 09/07/2015 00:19:08)

The latter saw Mthwakazi inhabitants forcibly removed to an area within an 80 kilometre radius of Bulawayo. The Ndebele people were evicted within a 150 km radius of Bulawayo in the semi-arid Gwayi Reserve in Tsholotsho District and Shangani Reserves in Nkayi and Lupane (Mkhwananzi, 5 March, 2018 at 14:05 hrs). Forced removals occurred throughout the country, altering traditional land uses and destabilising social orders and consequently, the built environment.

There can be no doubt that Zimbabwe's land problems are rooted in the racial land allocation policy practiced by settler governments where white settlers were given fertile productive land and Africans were driven to poor, unproductive reserves (Codesria, 2015: 64). These laws were also upheld in urban areas, resulting in the death of black identity and a collective African centre.

Architects, planners, surveyors, colonial power brokers and administrators as well as missionaries colluded to reconstruct local space and inscribe it with the aesthetics and values of European architecture and town planning (*ibid*). This resulted in the death or diminished visibility of local traditional identities as reflected in built environments, in general, and in civic spaces, in particular.

Other colonial governments also imported images from their country of origin to create a "homely" environment for the settler population and names were part of the package (Plumwood in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 381 – 389). Pre-independence Zimbabwe is typical of such developments. This study focuses on Bulawayo, the second largest city in the country with a strong colonial heritage and imagery, particularly with respect to civic buildings and spaces.

Post-independence Ndebele-Shona bi-polarism has meant that colonial subjugation of the Ndebele culture, history and language has not been addressed. Indeed, it has been further stunted and this is reflected in the built form. This research study thus aimed to preserve what is left of Mthwakazi built forms and to identify Afrocentric sources to create a new trajectory for Mthwakazi architecture. The Ndebele-Shona conflict has its roots in the Zimbabwe African National Union's (ZANU) split from the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in 1963, when factionalism assumed a tribal dimension. This ultimately led to the postcolonial ZANU government slaughtering 200

000 ZAPU supporters, predominantly amaNdebele, in Matabeleland and Midlands Provinces (Sisulu and Ncube, 2007). This genocide committed by the notorious Fifth Brigade has come to be known as Gukurahundi – the rain that washes away the chaff from the harvest (Masunungure, 2008: 4).

These atrocities were carried out between 1982 and 1987 when a so-called Unity Accord was signed. The Gukurahundi way of dealing with perceived and real enemies (the chaff) of ZANU-PF has been consistently applied throughout its rule including against the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (Masunungure, 2008: 5).

Masunungure (2008: 6) contends that the bi-polar arrangements prior to the Unity Accord (September, 1987) and those after the formation of the MDC in 1999 have effectively failed; the author thus proposes a multi-polar power configuration (2008).

Masunungure (2008) adds that there is a difference between state-building and nation-building and argues that most African countries are not yet nation states as they were handed over by the colonialists as a conglomeration of tribes bound by colonial boundaries (Masunungure, 2008: 3).

Zimbabwe is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-racial country but has never sought and implemented a multi-party solution (Masunungure, 2008: 6). This is evident in the violence prior to the 1987 Unity Accord (Gukurahundi), the farm invasions of 2000, the election re-run of 2008, the sanitized military coup of November 2017 and the killing of civilians on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 in Harare after the national plebiscite. Indeed, whenever there are dissenting voices, violence has been used to maintain a unipolar political power structure. Masunungure (2008) therefore proposes a proportional representation electoral system as a solution to Zimbabwe's multi-party political system.

These events are typical of how political ideology has distorted African identity. These political ideologies are buttressed by brute might to enforce the will of a few powerful at the expense of democracy which is also abused as a vehicle for postcolonial

colonialism. The distortion of African identity has a direct impact on placemaking and architecture.

## 1.2 DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.2.1 Definition of the problem

The research problem stems from the current political situation in Zimbabwe which has seen the Mthwakazi nation subjected to oppression and colonisation by the Shona nation from Northern Zimbabwe. This continuation of British colonial subjugation has its roots in the First Anglo-Ndebele war of 1893 that led to the defeat of the Ndebele Kingdom under King Lobengula. The cultural and political subjugation of the region has stunted the developmental trajectory of Mthwakazi culture, language and history, with the built form suffering a similar fate.

This study aims to highlight placemaking elements drawn from the Mthwakazi nation's rich Afrocentricity in order to design appropriate environments that reflect the identity of the people of this region. It thus aims to redress the on-going cultural domination suffered since 1893, focusing on placemaking.

The colonisation of one African culture by another goes beyond politics and extends to the built form. Just as there was no peace under European colonialism, there can never be peace when one African culture is imposed on another. This study seeks to use the built form to bring out the qualities of the oppressed Mthwakazi culture in Zimbabwe. It does so through Afrocentric placemaking and architecture with a focus on civic spaces. The task is to conceptualise Afrocentric placemaking and architecture in Mthwakazi's history and culture in order to re-establish collectively conceived built environments.

Civic spaces best capture the spirit of a place as they proclaim an identity beyond the local. The study analyses elements of the making of civic spaces due to the fact that

they reflect the power and identity of the political elite, collectively or individually. Civic spaces are considered as a collective of buildings in and around public open spaces.

The research problem is conceptually anchored on the fact that local imagery and identity are not appropriately reflected in postcolonial African built environments. The study focuses on civic spaces whose influence goes beyond the local context in order to reassert local identity. Civic spaces are a combination of outdoor spaces and buildings and the general infrastructure that surrounds them (Ghirardo, 1996: 43 – 102).

In this study post-colonialism is considered to be a dialectical concept that reflects the broad historical facts of decolonisation and the achievement of sovereignty as well as the realities of nations and peoples that suffer a new imperialist circumstances of economic and political dominance (Young, 2001: 5). The challenge is to create civic spaces with a postcolonial identity that responds to local contexts. How this can be achieved in multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-racial African urban contexts is the question this research poses.

Different approaches have been adopted in postcolonial countries to contextualise built environments. They include:

- perpetuation of the colonial status quo;
- total rejection of colonial value systems and adoption of local traditional ones;
- Highlighting traditional systems and images through decolonisation processes – the creation of hybrid built environments through engagement with local symbolism.

This research study adopts the last-mentioned approach as a decolonisation tool by investigating the basic constituents used to construct places – placemaking and architecture – and how these could be inspired by what will be generally referred to as Afrocentric sources. In the first option, colonial activities are maintained but under a different, African master; hence the use of the term “decolonisation” in this study rather than “post-colonisation”. At the core of decolonisation processes are efforts by the oppressed to exercise cultural, political and economic freedom without hindrance by

an outside, dominant entity, even if it means within the same colonial geographical entity.

At the core of this endeavour are how built environments are perceived and how their images and identity are created. This approach proposes a synthesised urban placemaking system that embodies African contextuality or Afrocentricity.

Identity discourses around placemaking in precolonial Africa set the tone for architectural development insofar as theory and practice are concerned. After examining the problem from a socio-political perspective, the study offers a solution from an architectural perspective. This entails a close examination of the study area.

The socio-political issues highlighted above and subsequent issues in relation to the built environment call into question the appropriateness of civic spaces in most postcolonial cities. The core issues are spatial use, imagery and meaning in postcolonial African cities. How relevant are colonial approaches to the design of civic spaces in contemporary African city contexts?

This study posits that architecture of colonial and some postcolonial civic centres does not reflect the identities of contemporary African societies and thus lacks appropriate Afrocentric imagery and values. Some contemporary designs of civic spaces have perpetuated Eurocentric value systems. This thesis thus explores how the Eurocentric imagery of civic spaces could be transformed through the use of placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources to generate the contemporary urban built form.

Bulawayo's Civic Precinct is used as a case study and its Afrocentric character (or lack thereof) is assessed using the core elements found in traditional/rural environments and Mthwakazi value systems. This enables the identification of appropriate contemporary civic architectural elements. The makings of civic spaces is considered with respect to building volumes and facades and the ensuing quality and form of outdoor spaces.

Numerous scholars hold the opinion that built environments should take cognisance of the ways in which local inhabitants construe built form (Abel, 1997). It follows that built environment professionals need to understand how built environments, spaces and forms are perceived by different cultural groups and sub-groups, and how different spatial arrangements can either support or impede locally and culturally derived patterns of use.

Thus, in order to create decolonised built environments, architects, urban designers and planners need to understand the meaning of placemaking in general, and particularly from an Afrocentric perspective. The concept of place is of interest firstly, because it is a fundamental expression of humankind's involvement in the world and secondly, due to the fact that advanced knowledge on the nature of place can contribute to the maintenance and reorganisation of prevailing places to create new ones that meet the needs of current inhabitants (Relph, 1976, in Carmona and Tiesdale, 2007: 103). Human beings (individually and collectively), plants, animals, places and even nations are recognised because of their identities. While there is no unanimously acknowledged conceptualisation of identity, some of its main characteristics are apparent (*ibid*). This study defines; analyses and validates the concept of identity from a social perspective, as one of the components of placemaking. This would then be instrumental in defining "appropriate identity" for cities that are going through decolonisation and a search for local identity in African cities such as Bulawayo's built environment.

How can built environment professionals contribute to an appropriate image for the decolonised cities/built environments of the twenty-first century without falling prey to bigotry or forfeiting the advantages of contemporary technologies from the West and other regions? This is the challenge confronting such professionals that seek to address or contribute to decolonisation processes through the built form.

### **1.2.2 Aim**

The aim of this research is to conceptualise Afrocentric placemaking and architecture in contemporary urban built form. The conceptualised Afrocentric placemaking and architecture would then be employed as the basis for the design of contemporary

Afrocentric civic urban precincts that exude local identity and imagery. Bulawayo and its environs are used to explore these ideas.

### **1.2.3 Objectives**

The study's key objectives are to:

- Trace the precolonial African condition both socially and with respect to the built form to enlighten decolonisation efforts as well as examine colonisation processes and their impact on the built environment.
- Develop a discourse around the right to self-determination and reclamation of an African identity using the concept of social identity, symbolic interaction theory and other correlated theories. This forms the basis for Afrocentric sources that may be considered to be both abstract and real.
- Critique selected contemporary civic spaces on the African continent in order to identify the underlying principles and conceptualise placemaking drawn from Afrocentric sources. The core purpose is to identify civic spaces that exude Afrocentric identity.
- Discuss how the identified placemaking elements in and around Bulawayo's Afrocentric sources could contribute to the identity of the city's contemporary architectural and urban design of civic spaces.
- Analyse Bulawayo's Civic Precinct in the context of conceptualised placemaking inspired by local Afrocentric sources.
- Crafting identification techniques model for placemaking and architecture inspired by Afrocentric sources.

## **1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

### **1.3.1 Delimitation of the research problem**

This study examines placemaking inspired by Afrocentric sources from a general perspective with the discourse informed by theories from Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology as well as architectural practice and theory. The main thrust is to define



what is meant by Afrocentric sources with a focus on the Mthwakazi Kingdom pre-Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 that led to colonial rule. The results will be used to inform placemaking elements with specific reference to civic spaces. The aim is to develop a reservoir of knowledge that will assist designers of civic spaces to create built forms that acknowledge their context with a specific focus on African settings, especially those that are closely related to Mthwakazi. The study also examines the issues of imagery, aesthetics, spatial use and planning, and form making and composition in relation to the makings of civic spaces. The intention is not to produce prescriptive design solutions but broad guidelines or a model with respect to the development of the urban and architectural design framework. Details such as technology and materials are not covered as these can be considered as given in the globalised world. The focus is the contemporary urban form rather than rural forms, although the same principles would be applicable.

In terms of the historical and geographical context of the case study, the main cultural and spatial influences on Mthwakazi built forms are:

- British (colonial) – Impact of the built environment as an expression of power and control will be analysed.
- AmaNguni – mainly amaZulu due to the historical origins of the founder of the amaNdebele nation, King Mzilikazi. These influences are bound by sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa and Zimbabwe.
- Local – these include various Shona and other Mthwakazi groups such as Kalanga, Nambya, Sotho, Tonga and Venda.

This research focuses on the historical and/or geographical boundaries surrounding these influences. Within the Mthwakazi Kingdom, the study focuses on areas that were heavily influenced by Nguni culture. Areas dominated by Tonga, Venda, Nambya and Sotho inhabitants are not covered in detail, but their influence is highlighted when the need arises.

### **1.3.2 Definition of terms**

- **Centre**

This refers to the manner in which human beings perceive space or, in

general, the universe. They perceive it to be centred upon themselves. The centre can be externalised as a reference in the environment (Moughtin, 2003: 89).

- **Collective centre**

This is a community driven worldview or a generally agreed upon way of perceiving space. It is usually driven by common community values and could be linked to social beliefs or cosmological orientation. In this respect **collectively centred** means being a product of communal decisions.

- **Historical settlements**

These are composed of traditional and colonial settlements.

- **Traditional settlements**

These are considered to be precolonial settlements.

- **Representivity**

Outcomes that are generally viewed as representative of the group in question. It symbolises a collective centre.

- **Contextuality**

Being contextually grounded; derived from a collective centre.

- **Colonialism**

Is viewed from two perspectives: European colonialism and internal cultural colonialism imposed by a dominant African group on minority ethnic groups in the so-called independent African states.

- **Colonial settlements**

These are settlements that were/are built and administered by foreign powers/governments/territories before self-determination was/is achieved.

- **Postcolonial colonialism**

Also referred to as **internal colonialism** in this study. This is colonisation of minority groups by a dominant cultural group. This phenomenon is particularly a reference to countries formerly colonised by European powers, in the main, who subsequently gained independence. It is not similar to neo-colonialism which is considered a reestablishment of the former colonial powers' influence and control in one form or another.

- **Responsivity**  
The art of designing places that respond to local contexts. Design decisions are informed by the collective centre.
- **Decolonisation**  
The processes that formerly colonised countries or states go through to disentangle themselves from colonial bondage.
- **Placefulness**  
Fullness of place definition – imbued with qualities of place identity. Possessing the aura of a collective centre.
- **The art of placemaking**  
This is a natural, God-given talent of making places that is not determined by levels of formal education but can be formalised in the context of time. It refers to the outstanding phenomena of active and passive spaces. This study examines both passive and active placemaking phenomena with an emphasis on outstanding over the ordinary ones. The art of placemaking is the ability to creatively conceptualise places that embody collectively centred values, principles and beliefs.
- **KwaBulawayo or koBulawayo**  
This refers to the historical seat of the amaNdebele Kingdom under Lobengula.
- **Bulawayo**  
This is the largest contemporary city of Mthwakazi and is Zimbabwe's second largest city. It is a corrupted English version of koBulawayo.
- **uBulawayo**  
This refers to residents of Bulawayo.
- **KwaZulu**  
This refers to the precolonial Kingdom founded by Shaka Zulu.
- **Mthwakazi Nation**  
This is the amaNdebele nation whose boundaries were set by treaties signed by Lobengula with various parties, including the British Monarch (Jameson Treaty), and the Afrikaner Republic (the Piet Grobler Treaty of 1887) in modern day Limpopo Province. It is also referred to as

uHlabezulu. Mthwakazi consists of Zimbabwe's Provinces of Matabeleland and parts of the Midlands.

- **Shona nation**

Is a conglomerate of sub-tribes that speak chiShona found in eastern and northern Zimbabwe. They include the Karanga, Zezuru and Manyika, in the main and constitute about 70% of the Zimbabwean population.

- **African**

Is used in the composite sense not as an extension of ethnicity or endorsement of biological determinism, but as a cultural identity (Martin, 2008: 956).

- **Afrocentric**

This refers to an ambience, outlook and character that aspire to African value systems and identity. The term also refers to the context of what constitutes African worldview. In reality it encapsulates the values and origins of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* denotes inert social qualities of human beings that distinguishes one from animals and other forms of creatures - humanity.

- **Afrocentricity**

Afrocentricity is used interchangeably with Afrocentrism and generally seeks to re-enumerate the contribution of all mankind to the history of the world on equal footing thus disputing a monodirectional Eurocentric view (Hughes, 1994). It is a philosophy that advocates an African collective centeredness. It puts an African as the agent in all Afrocentric-centred localness endeavours. Its focus is the African as an agent. The lens is African. This study proposes use of this lens to innovatively conceptualise Afrocentric architectural urbanism in contemporary African cities that exude authenticity in existential *genius loci*.

- **Subjectification**

The process of self-activation and activation by others to become an agent or subject as opposed to an object.

- **Objectification**

The process of self-activation or being activated by others to become an object as opposed to a subject.

- **Traditional**  
Is preferred but is used interchangeably with indigenous and classical.
- **World view**  
A particular philosophy of life or conception of the world (Google Dictionary). See how this is related to Amos Rapoport's (2002: 9) diagrammatic dismantling of "culture".
- **Maat**  
Is the goddess of the unalterable laws of heaven (Martin, 2008: 956).

These terms are used at various points in this study.

### **1.3.3 Stating the assumptions**

Coexistence of cultures is the basis for human dignity and development. This lays the foundation for mutual respect within and across cultures. Image is a cultural product, as is identity. The built environment is part of image production across cultures. Placemaking is a product of human endeavours to reflect self-determination and identity and thus reproduce ecology. Thus, placemaking is a product of physical as well as abstract components of the built environment.

The way people organize their places is influenced by their belief systems, aspirations and worldview (Unwin, 2009: 32). Since world views vary from one culture to another, so does architecture. The assumption is that Africans are a heterogeneous group with common elements of worldviews. This research aims to identify and use this as a resource in the design processes of built forms, with a specific focus on civic spaces.

A built environment is a composition of building blocks that are abstract and real and exude their identity and image. These building blocks of place are the physical components of what are called placemaking elements and they determine the image of a place (Bacon, 1980: 41; Relph in Carmona and Tiesdell, 2007: 104 - 106). The intensity of the projected image determines whether the identity is local, national or international.

A critical assumption of this study is that every human being is entitled to self-determination without which conflict will arise in pursuit of that goal. The art of building is considered contextual in relation to the built environment. The key issue for this study on identity as a phenomenon is the generated image – particularly images that exude Afrocentricity.

The study's primary assumption is that human beings are constituted from a centre that becomes the basis for their existence - existentialism. As a social being, a person seeks commonality with fellow human beings and this collective centring is expressed in the form of civic spaces.

### **1.3.4 Key questions**

#### **1.3.4.1 Main question**

How can placemaking inspired by Afrocentric sources engage with architectural processes in the creation of contemporary built environments that radiate an Afrocentric identity and imagery?

#### **1.3.4.2 Primary Sub-questions**

- What are the key theoretical issues that provide the basis for the identification of placemaking elements that can be drawn from Afrocentric sources?
- What was the nature of the African pre-colonial condition and how was it reflected in the built environment? How did colonialism impact on the pre-colonial African condition?
- What constitutes Afrocentric sources in the context of placemaking and how can they be identified?
- Why is there a need for research on Afrocentrism with respect to the built form?
- What is decolonisation and what is its baseline? How can placemaking be defined in such a way as to reconnect with the precolonial African condition?
- How have theories on and around self-reflection on the built form or nature been applied across the globe? How has this been applied in contemporary African built environments?

#### 1.3.4.3 Secondary Sub-questions

- Who are the likely respondents to provide information on appropriate Mthwakazi placemaking elements and what methods should be used to gather data?
- What are the likely placemaking elements in and around Bulawayo and its environs that can be used to develop an appropriate local contemporary identity?
- What is the study's contribution to knowledge?

#### 1.3.5 Hypothesis

##### 1.3.5.1 Main Hypothesis

- Afrocentric sources are imbued with placemaking elements that have the potential to be used as identity generators in the design of Afrocentric contemporary built environments with specific reference to formerly colonised African contexts.

##### 1.3.5.2 Sub-hypothesis

- The city of Bulawayo is one of the African cities borne out of colonialism whose placemaking and architecture can only generate local identity if it is informed by Afrocentric sources.

The outcome of this research effort is thus the identification, through a proposed model, of the Afrocentric sources that offer design solutions for a hybrid architecture of the future.

## 1.4 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the ultimate goal of this research is the conceptualisation of placemaking and architecture as a phenomena derived from Afrocentric sources that will assist in the design of contemporary urbanism, it is important to explore concepts and theories that will assist in achieving this. By its very nature, Afrocentricity requires a search for true African identity. Given that Africans are a specific social grouping, Afrocentricity is attached to a social identity. Symbolic interaction theory can be used to understand the decolonisation of an African subject by unpacking the African precolonial condition, thus enabling self-reflection on nature then and in contemporary times. Colonialism in all its forms has left an indelible mark on the African both physically and emotionally. This needs to be analysed through existential theory – the built environments being the unravelling of the centre of an individual to collectively centeredness as physically expressed by civic spaces.

New urbanism and social identity are useful twin concepts to view the contemporary built environment and ensure that Afrocentricity is appropriately grounded. The discourse will enable the researcher to develop a model to identify placemaking and architecture inspired by Afrocentric sources. This is crucial as it sets the basis for the design processes that this research seeks to develop. Afrocentric sources can be used as sources of identity generators in the design of contemporary built forms that respond to African built environments with specific reference to contexts in culturally colonised territories such as those of Mthwakazi's Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

This study employs the following key concepts and theories:

- Placemaking
- Social identity
- Symbolic interaction theory
- Afrocentricity
- Precolonial Africa
- Postcolonial colonialism
- Existential theory
- Decolonisation
- Afrocentric new urbanism

The precolonial condition is examined as an entrée to the theoretical development of this discourse. This sets the stage for a discussion on colonisation and subsequently



decolonisation with respect to the African condition. The study seeks to conceptualise placemaking as a phenomena inspired by Afrocentric sources that can be employed as identity generators of the contemporary built form. In this study, placemaking refers to a communal activity driven by collective centeredness – a communally driven activity. The following subsection views placemaking from this perspective.

#### **1.4.1 Placemaking**

Placemaking is a key concept in this research in that its major thrust is pivoted on creating appropriate places for postcolonial or decolonised African civic spaces. The study also examines situations where a dominant African culture “colonises” another through unwelcome and unsolicited cultural dominance. Placemaking is about people and their centred lives in their built environments. It is predominantly an urban design activity that interacts with the architectural domain of space. Urban design is allied to architecture and planning and this is particularly true of placemaking. The subject of urban design is the arrangement of buildings into a single composition or entity. Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its on-going evolution ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)).

Although the aesthetic dimension is a significant part of architecture, social and contextual issues are critical in creating a sense of place and it is the human dimension which gives a place distinctive meaning (Pearce, 2011: 56). Ronal Lee Fleming (2007: 14) states that it is probably not the architecture that turns a physical locale into a well-loved place; remembrance of human interaction often helps to claim it. He adds that, while a good physical design aids interaction, ultimately, the recollection of patterns of life lived in a particular building or space creates the cornerstone of mental association and gives such places the patina of affection (Simon, 2004: 2).

The single most important function of a place is its symbolic meaning. Places can evoke deep emotions and arouse profound feelings in human beings. These could be related to the history of the place, its meaning, geographic features, and its local religious or general cosmological importance. These emotions owe very little or nothing to critical judgement. Cliff Moughtin (2003: 88) argues that this primitive

reaction to the world around us, including built environments, is intimately and irrevocably connected to the ways in which the human body is perceived.

Each civilisation has its “human body” phenomena and its development is centred on itself. Humankind’s perceptions of space are centred on themselves with the five senses being the mediators with the environment. Moughtin (2003: 89) states that the development of schemata for the general organisation of space based on this subjective idea of centre extends into the notion of an externalised centre as a point of reference in the environment. In this sense, placemaking can be considered to be the creation of a centre around which lives can be lived; lives that individuals can build their memories around in an external environment one can call a place. Bringing to life the externalisation of these centres in a collective manner is what brings about placemaking of civic spaces. These could be in the form of streets, squares and domains and can be expressed through any of Kevin Lynch’s (1960) five elements of urban form.

As noted above, social identity is of paramount importance in the placemaking process. In this study, placemaking is considered to be a product of collective centeredness.

### **1.4.2 Social Identity**

Identification of a place lies at the heart of the creation or making of architecture (Unwin, 2009: 28). A place is to architecture what meaning is to language (ibid). Unwin introduces the link between place and identity. The African has a particular place under the sun; hence his/her identity as an individual or a collective. Human beings are social animals and they collectively create a social identity. Some theorists define identity as a product of interaction in the social world that in turn guides interaction in that world (Simon, 2004: 2).

Terry (2000) notes, that the social identity theory harnesses the dimensions of categorisation, self-concept, self-knowledge, self-consistency and self-system, which all play a part in understanding group behaviour. Self-concept enables an understanding of the importance of perceptions of one’s personal existence in a given

space. Self-concept consists of two parts, namely, (i) personal identity based on individual characteristics and (ii) social identity which is part of an individual's self-concept but is derived from knowledge of one's membership of a social group (Brown and Capozza, 2000: 33 – 34).

In general, identity is used to designate sameness across persons or over time to capture the core, foundational aspects that promote the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collectiveness (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). One can suddenly be aware of an identity which they have been suffering from for a very long time without knowing and thus awakening a hidden self (Appiah, 1995: 103 - 115).

Brown and Capozza (2000) note that the subject of self and how it is related to place has been discussed by sociologists and architects alike that seek to link the self to built form and how the two influence each other (McCarthy, 1984). The symbolic interaction theory captures the spirit of self-reflection with respect to interaction between users and the environment (natural or built).

How individuals construe the world around them is critical in understanding how they are a reflection of their environment and vice-versa. This study thus explores the issue of perceptions before engaging in symbolic interaction theory discourse. Perceptions cause a person to emulate or choose to associate with a social grouping that they believe reflects their value system. Experiencing something by way of sense is termed perception. This can occur in two ways, through the eyes in what is termed visual perception or through the ears and other parts of human body in what are known as auditory perceptions.

### **1.4.3 Symbolic interaction theory**

Symbolic interactionism, also known as symbolic interaction, can be defined as the process of interaction that results in individual formation of meanings (Blumer, 1969). Its origins lie in the work of Dewey (1981) who believed that human beings are best understood in practical, interactive relation to their environment ([onlinemedia@utwente.nl](mailto:onlinemedia@utwente.nl)). The challenge of repositioning Africa and deconstructing its ontological base represents existential opposition to academia, institutions and

scholarship, where preconceived ideas of Africa as “the other” have become dominant. Buntu (2013: 1) contends that there is a pressing need to reclaim a collective sense of self as the precondition for authentic change. Such change should reflect self and this applies to all facets of life, including architecture.

Contextualisation of social identity and defining self through symbolic interaction theory are the basis for how Africans are viewed in this study from a global perspective. The key conceptualisation of what constitute an African is viewed through the lens of Afrocentricity.

#### **1.4.4 Afrocentricity**

Africans interact with their environments in a different way from Europeans as they have a different centre and their social identities thus also differ. The centre of an African is within him/herself and expression of that centre externally through built environments will be different from a European’s or anyone’s for that matter. This study examines how that centre was interrupted; what interrupted it and the possibility of reconnecting with the primordial African condition without necessarily throwing away the baby with the bath water in an existential and decolonisation sense.

Dastile (2013: 93) describes African decolonisation as reclamation of African voices through recognition of heritage and knowledge systems brought about by oral tradition. This study examines the marginalised architecture that tells the African story. Mazama defines Afrocentrism as a conscious thought and analytical process where Africans view themselves as subjects that are agents in the world (Mazama in Dastile, 2013: 95).

Like many other studies in Afrocentric knowledge circles, this study seeks African solutions to African-centred problems through an African-centred paradigm that is considered a logical starting point in knowledge generation. The concept of Afrocentricity is used as the point of departure. Afrocentricity is a paradigm (Asante, 2007; Monteiro-Ferreira, 2009: 327 - 336; Dastile, 2013: 93 - 104) and not a religion as detractors such as Clarence Walker (2001) would claim. The rationale is to eviscerate the seemingly insatiable import of Western hegemonic practices drawn

from colonial spheres of the built environment as part of an African-centred decolonial paradigm.

Colonisation altered the African *genius loci* through the introduction of foreign social ideologies that were reflected in the built form, thus creating and reflecting a self that was non-African and that persists in postcolonial cities and towns, especially with respect to the design and construction of civic spaces. It is therefore critical to review this trajectory and recoup an African self through engaging with existential theory.

#### **1.4.5 Precolonial Africa**

The decolonisation agenda takes into consideration the reinvention of a primordial African identity and thus seeks to restore the connectivity between the African subject and his/her natural world view. Precolonialism reflects raw cultural practices that were not tainted by external influences, especially Europeans. The precolonial condition was a reflection of an African outlook on the universe and its natural trajectory was interrupted by colonialism. In the case of European post-colonialism, the colonial master changes from being white to being black and this is reflected in the built form. This study traces the cosmological influence on the concept of centre and its reflection in the built form.

#### **1.4.6 Postcolonial colonialism**

Traditionally colonialism entails the imposition of foreign ideologies on local populations and is thus an unnatural developmental trajectory for the colonised. Colonialism can be defined as the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country or territory, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically (Google dictionary). In the context of this study, cultural colonialism is the practice by which a powerful dominant group in a country directly controls less powerful minority groups through imposition of its cultural practices and world view. The coloniser uses the colonised's resources to increase their own power and wealth with the support of state resources, including the security apparatus.

African colonialism generally refers to colonisation of Africans by Europeans at the turn of the nineteenth century but has since evolved into African communities colonising other Africans within so-called “independent” states, resulting in wars, strife and hunger – a phenomenon referred to as postcolonial colonialism in this study. Colonisation is designed to achieve disconnection between local populations and their world view. The domination of local populations was/is not restricted to the geographical, political and social spheres but is also reflected in the built form. The colonisers seek to recreate home country/territory-like images and in the process decimate locally derived built environments.

#### **1.4.7 Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophy that takes as its starting point the individual’s existence – human existence in a specific context together with all activities of that given place (Earnshaw, 2006: 1). Existence is used by existentialists to conceptualise a human being. Existential theory is an expression and belief in human beings as a building block in understanding the universe. What sets it apart from most other philosophies is that it begins with the “individual” rather than the ‘universal’ and thus does not aim to arrive at general truths; its insistence on personal insights as the only means to real understanding means that it makes claims to objective knowledge (*ibid*). This philosophy regards the individual as the absolute source.

For many philosophers, the word ‘existential’ is most at home in the expression ‘existential phenomenology’ (Cooper, 1990, 5). Phenomenology in this instance is revival or human beings’ living contact with reality (Moran, 2000: 5). While debate continues on these two philosophies, this study focuses on existentialism to examine Africans as individuals that are the source of their existence. Existentialism fits well with the study due to its focus on the individual as the source of understanding the universe. It also acts as an anchor theory for placemaking as an activity that creates collective centeredness and ultimately leads to symbolic interactionism as one seeks to reflect self and self being reflected and ultimately, Afrocentrism. Decolonisation is considered in the context of an Afrocentric existentialism that leads to placemaking that can only symbolically represent an African identity.

#### **1.4.8 Decolonisation**

Theorists generally define decolonisation as the process of releasing a country from being a colony or granting independence (Rothermund, 2006). It is described as a series of political acts, occasionally peaceful, often confrontational, and frequently militant, by which territories and countries dominated by Europeans gained their independence (Betts, 2004: 111). Decolonisation is an on-going process (Betts, 2004: 4) that can be evaluated from various perspectives but it effectively means the processes of ending colonisation.

In the main, decolonisation processes have been a social phenomenon. However, the built environment has not followed suit and the images found in most cities of formerly colonised countries are still Eurocentric in nature and lack local content. In pursuit of corrective measures, this study employs the concept of social identity to understand the identity of an African as an agent of his/her own destiny.

#### **1.4.9 Afrocentric new urbanism**

As urban and older suburban neighbourhoods become more diverse, neighbours are less likely to share everyday activities and the sense of community that such associations foster. Increasingly, neighbours do not worship in nearby churches, do not have children (or dogs) to take to the park, and shop at a distant mall or online rather than at the corner store. Thus, while the icons of older neighbourhoods – churches, parks, and main streets – remain beloved, these traditional forms have come to represent the body rather than the soul of a community (Brown, Dixon, and Gillham, 2009: 84). The concept of new urbanism will be viewed from an Afrocentric context through an African collective centred lens hence the concept of Afrocentric new urbanism. It is a reconstruction of the history of African settlement planning from an African perspective. As will be discussed in the initial sections of Chapter Four, communality is key in African living hence the importance of civic spaces that the Afrocentric new urbanism has to actively support as part of decolonisation processes.

The theoretical and conceptual framework set out above provides the basis for a new approach in the creation of Afrocentric built environments envisioned by this research.

It emphasises that the African can be an agent of his/her destiny with his/her interaction with the environment (natural or built) being the apex of that effort. Afrocentricity in this context is driven by the concept of a centre - the natural affinity to perceive oneself as a centre as conceptualised in placemaking. How a person construes their world should be part of the design process in order to capture the Afrocentric identity with respect to the built form and civic spaces in particular.

## 1.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter laid the foundation for this thesis by defining the research problem that is centred on decolonisation of built environments not only under postcolonial conditions but in post-independent African states. The study seeks to identify a conceptual and theoretical framework that would enable the construction of a new model to design Afrocentric, collectively centred built environments. This concluding section summarises Chapter One and outlines the structure of the thesis.

### 1.5.1 Summary

The theoretical and conceptual framework adopted is summarised in Fig. 1.5.1 below. The research problem is that of built environments that do not reflect local value systems. They do not represent the self, especially in most African built environments.

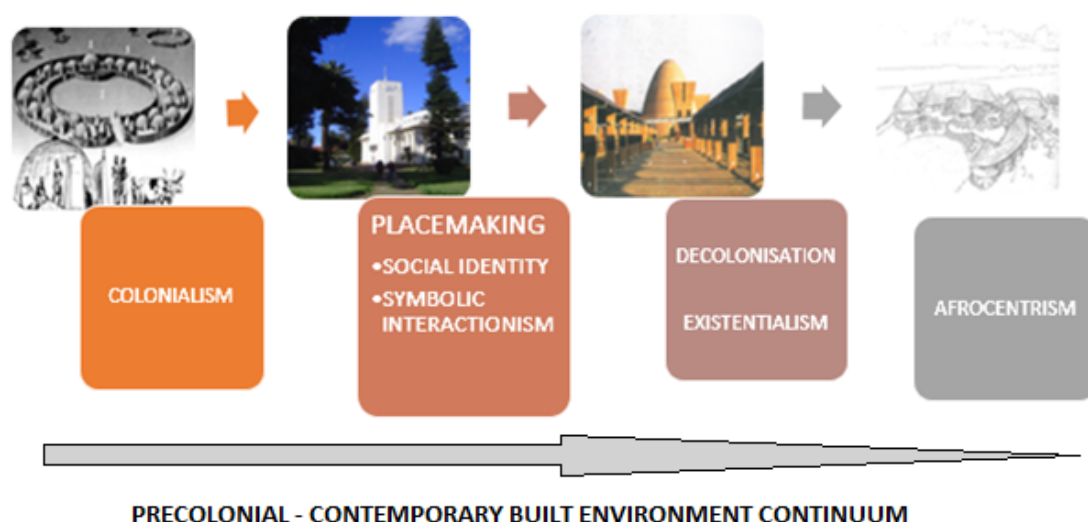


Fig. 1.5.1: Summary of the conceptual and theoretical framework (Author)



The root causes are colonialism and cultural domination – through brute force, mainstream egalitarianism (discounting minority needs and aspirations) or both. Placemaking principles are the anchors of all the concepts and theories adopted due to the need to produce collectively centred spaces. Civic spaces are the best vehicle to demonstrate the principle of Afrocentric collective centeredness.

For the purposes of this study, placemaking is driven by the social identity of communities that consume given built environments and are a reflection of self and vice-versa through symbolic interactionism. These theories and concepts provide the basis for a decolonisation process informed by existentialism. What has been done is done and is part of the existing context (existential theory). Redressing colonial legacies should be carried under the ambit of Afrocentrism from a collective centred perspective.

### **1.5.2 Structure of the Thesis**

The organising ideological alignment of this thesis consists of chronology and geographical location. The research problem is based on the individual's centre and how it is transposed to the public realm. The chronological strata are the precolonial through to the postcolonial periods whilst the geographical location is global through to the local (World - Africa – Zimbabwe – Mthwakazi Regions – Bulawayo – the case study site).

The basis of this study structure is summarised in Fig. 1.5.2. The study begins with the thesis introduction setting out the research background and problem together with the attendant questions and an introduction of the theoretical and conceptual framework. Chapter Two sets out the research methods and techniques. Chapter Three then details the theoretical and conceptual framework thus setting the scene to develop indicators. The anchoring theory, placemaking, sets the tone for identified theories that then leads to Chapter Four that tackles Afrocentric placemaking and architectural challenges and themes from precolonial through to colonial. Chapter Five outlines the context of the case study beginning at precolonial setting in Zimbabwe.

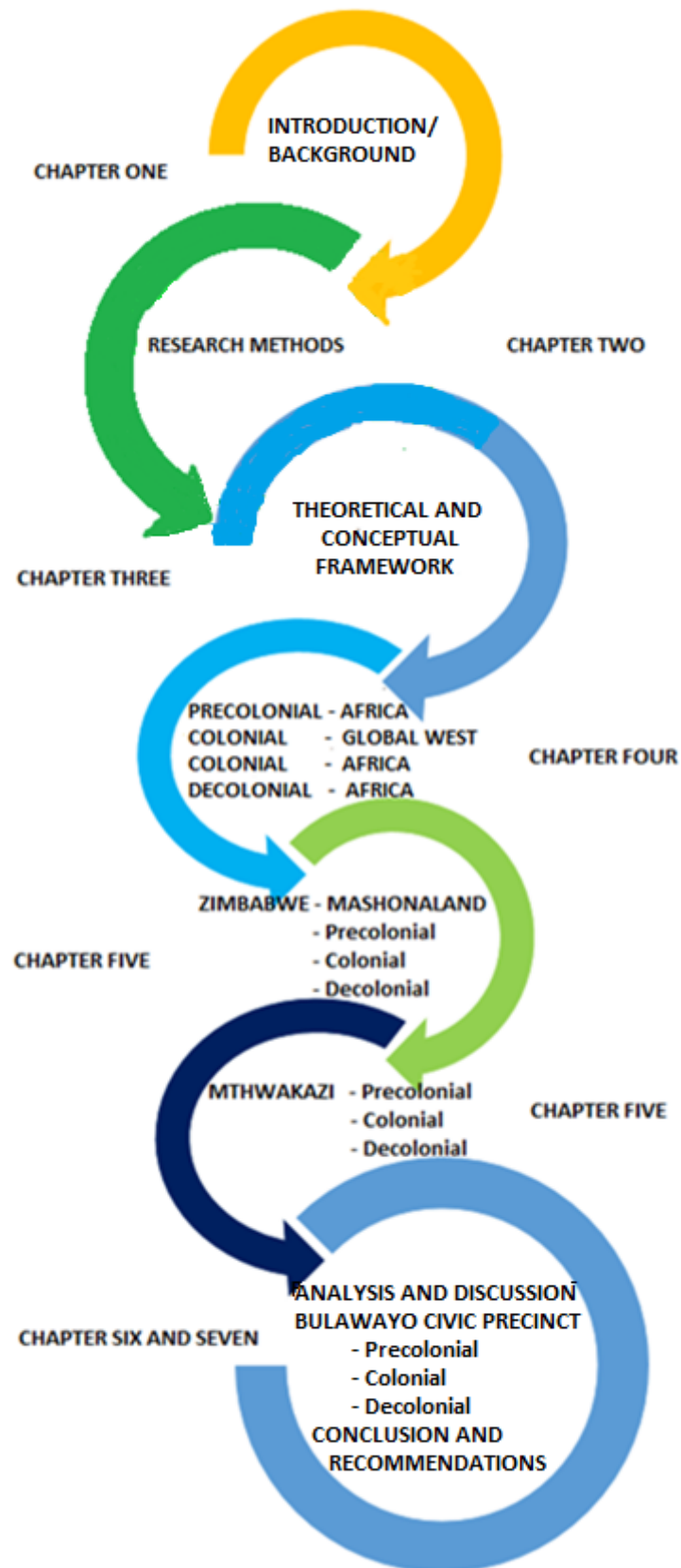


Fig. 1.5.2: Thematic layout of thesis structure and case study context (Author)

This then leads to Chapter Six that focuses on Bulawayo's Afrocentric placemaking and architecture. The Bulawayo Civic Precinct is then studied in the context of background research in its entirety with Chapter Seven being the conclusion and recommendations.

The following chapter discusses the research methods and techniques used to examine the challenges confronting built forms in African settings with respect to responding to Afrocentric sources and placemaking in postcolonial and post-independent Africa. The chapter begins by laying out the philosophical considerations on how data sources were identified.

# CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study is to identify Afrocentric sources of placemaking and architecture that can be deployed to design built environments that reflect, embody, and encapsulate the African identity with a specific focus on the Mthwakazi nation. While the study focuses on the design of civic spaces, this approach can be used in the design of any building and space typology. The civic space is selected due to the extent to which places impact on users' psyche physically, visually, spiritually or otherwise.

Identifying Afrocentric sources that impact on how space and buildings are designed or produced is a challenging task as these are tangible and intangible, visible and invisible, and physical and spiritual. Gathering information on these sources was the main challenge during fieldwork. In essence, the study lays the foundation for the design of contemporary Afrocentric built environments.

The intertwining dynamics of the physical and spiritual, and tangible and intangible, and the complexity of African societies call for research methods that appreciate the heterogeneity of contemporary urban populations. The methods employed to collect empirical data took such complexities into account. Observation, recording of events and interviews only reveal parts of the whole and the whole is not merely the collection of these parts (Senan, 1993: 84).

The methodology was thus designed to develop the various facets of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed in Chapter Three and to determine how these played out on the ground in the selected case study setting. At the heart of the fieldwork was the search for placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources. These sources were identified, justified and linked to placemaking and architecture in the discussions with respondents.

## 2.2 CONTEXTUAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The methodology adopted for this study consisted of secondary and primary research. The initial sections of this chapter present a philosophical overview. This is followed by a detailed discussion on data collection methods, focusing on the empirical research. The secondary research involved an extensive literature review on placemaking and architecture inspired by Afrocentric sources as a driver of identity generation for the contemporary urbanism. This section presents the study's theoretical and conceptual framework followed by the literature review. The theoretical and conceptual framework forms the foundation for the research effort. The primary research was informed by the secondary research and was used to collect empirical data, primarily through interviews. A qualitative research approach was mostly adopted due to the nature of phenomena under study. The purpose of qualitative research was to describe and understand issues around Afrocentric placemaking and architecture from the participants' point of view (analytical and descriptive, i.e. exploring attitudes, behaviour and experiences) (Leedy, 1997: 104 and Dawson, 2009: 23)

### 2.2.1 Secondary research

The secondary research formed the bedrock of this research effort and was concerned with the identification and development of placemaking and architecture inspired by what are termed Afrocentric sources. These Afrocentric placemaking and architectural elements then become identity generators of the contemporary built form. The study was motivated by the failure to take local contextual issues into account that is personified by the manner in which current civic spaces have been designed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and other formerly colonised urban settlements. The images projected are Eurocentric to the point of marginalising local cultures and world views in general and thus deny local populations the right to connect spiritually and otherwise to their land of birth. The marginalisation of the Mthwakazi nation has been intensified by the current government of Zimbabwe and its Zezuru-centric philosophy, with a negative impact on the built form in the region.

Most African cultures use the phrase “the son of the soil” (“*umntwana wenhlabathi*” in isiNguni and “*mwana wevhu*” in chiShona) as an expression of the God-given claim to the land and all above and below it. Most also claim identity through an association with nature (rivers, mountains, forests, plains, deserts, etc.). From this perspective, nature is never only natural; it is always fraught with religious values and is thus laden with cosmic interpretations and associations (Sone, 2016: 8). Alienating inhabitants through designing or creating built environments that do not capture the spirit of the place is thus a travesty. The secondary data sources for this study were guided by this philosophical orientation.

The theoretical framework for this study is a call for back to basics in the Afrocentric project. It is a call for built environment professionals to engage with alternative decolonisation efforts to address a postcolonial phenomenon articulated as local colonialism. Local colonialism refers to the political, economic and cultural domination of minority groups by the majority within postcolonial countries hence the alternative conceptualisation of “postcolonial colonialism”. The theoretical framework draws on studies in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and religion as well as precedent and case studies in the built environment field. The literature review began by examining the precolonial African condition in search of Afrocentric sources that could become the basis for placemaking and architecture in the creation and design of contemporary built environments whose responsivity is anchored on the African *genius loci*.

### **2.2.2 Primary research**

Having laid the foundation with the background research supported by secondary data, primary data were gathered through a case study, interviews and observation. Background information assisted in:

- developing appropriate clusters and sampling frames; and
- justification for the sample sizes and data collection methods. Generally sample size of 10% was used in this study.

Throughout history and across the globe, political regimes have used symbolism in built environments to reflect their power, control and dominance. The use of such

symbols has been tolerated, totally rejected or accepted by the general populace, the consumers of these built environments. It can therefore be argued that government buildings or projects are an attempt to reflect government ideologies and aspirations (Vale, 1992). Vale (1992: 5) adds that no society is without its contradictions, and all buildings reflect them, especially government buildings. The sponsors and designers of such facilities may wish to downplay or transcend these contradictions or highlight them in a way which reinforces their rule.

The fact that Zimbabwe as a country and society is pregnant with such contradictions has led some researchers to suggest a reconfiguration of the country's political system (Masunugure, 2008). Many post-colonial countries inherited states without nations. Like state-building, nation-building is a work of art and many African leaders have proved to be good state-builders but poor nation-builders. In a country with a kaleidoscope of cultural, ethnic, racial, religious and other salient social identities, nation-building is a major challenge (Masunungure, 2008: 3). Masunungure (2008: 3 - 4) proposes a multi-polar power configuration as it offers a more stable and viable arrangement as long as it becomes more politically inclusive. While this is a noble cause, the ZANU-PF government has set a course where historical animosities between the Ndebele and Shona head the agenda, with consequent resistance by Ndebele-speaking regions. Such animosities are transposed into architecture through symbolism, politics, economics and other cultural artefacts.

Zimbabwe's never-ending economic hardships have brought to the fore even more radical suggestions of an independent Mthwakazi Republic (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006). This is the product of the unipolar power structure that the ZANU-PF government has pursued since the advent of so-called independence in 1980.

The Ndebele existed as an independent nation until 1893 when King Lobengula was violently removed from power by the British colonialists with the help of Zezuru batsmen. The Pioneer Column occupied Mashonaland and raised the Union Jack in Fort Salisbury in 1890 without any resistance, while Matabeleland was conquered after the Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006: 40). The Ndebele Nation (Mthwakazi) has experienced two phases of "foreign" domination since 1893: British occupation (1893 – 1980) and Shona hegemony (1980 - present). Each witnessed

governments that manipulated the built environment to display their power and dominance over the Mthwakazi people.



**Fig. 2.2.1: The Mthwakazi Republic (Mthwakazi Free State) (spanish.fansshare.com. Accessed: 10/01/2017 – 15:00)**

This study focuses on Bulawayo Province. Bulawayo is the largest city in the Mthwakazi region (Fig. 2.2.1) and the other three provinces (Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North and parts of Midlands Province) provide the rural backdrop to the civic space under study. Bulawayo Province was selected as it is home to the biggest settlement in Mthwakazi and is the torch bearer of future development. Furthermore, the current Bulawayo city was built in the shadows of Old Bulawayo or kwaBulawayo or koBulawayo – King Lobengula’s capital.

Bulawayo is dominated by colonial architecture, especially the city centre, which basically recreated a homeland ambience for the colonisers. British colonialism was replaced by Zezuru domination which is Afrocentric but lacks local cultural, social, and



historical input. This area was thus selected to explore the adoption of an Afrocentric design model for the city.

Like most governments around the world that seek to manipulate the built environment to reflect their ideologies, the Shona-dominated government of Zimbabwe reflects its dominance of Ndebele-speaking regions by downplaying Ndebele culture and history and/or imposing images that are ostensibly Shona in their outlook. The former strategy takes centre stage at this point in time.

This study focuses on local responses to built forms, especially in relation to Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity recognises all African cultures that are indigenous to the continent. The best way in which to source information relevant to the study was thus to identify influential Ndebele-speaking respondents that share the region's value systems, with isiNdebele Afrocentricity as the central theme. A mix of questionnaires and focussed interviews was conducted with the following informant clusters:

1. **Chiefs:** This category mainly comprised selected Chiefs and Headmen under a particular Chief, with key informants identified by the Chief and Headmen (snowball sampling). Key informants were elderly respondents versed in isiNdebele culture and customs that understand isiNdebele cosmology, symbolism, proverbs, and myths and are skilled in storytelling. Only Chiefs traditionally under the Nguni (under King Mzilikazi) and Lozvi (Rozvi) (under Mambo) were considered. There are around 64 such Chiefs in the Mthwakazi region and a sample of 10 Chiefs was above the minimum of 10% required to draw statistically accurate data.
2. **Councillors:** Given that there are no Chiefs in Bulawayo Province, Councillors were interviewed. These respondents were selected due to their knowledge of traditional amaNdebele settlements and what influenced their form. The same criteria used to select Chiefs were employed. The sample was restricted to councillors of Mthwakazi origin that understand how cosmological issues influence social structures and the built form as well as how current identity issues are defined and how they impact on the contemporary rural built form. Issues discussed included identification of geographical elements that were

historically influential in traditional settlements. Other considerations were the Councillors' understanding of how the built and natural environment reflects self. The aim was to draw lessons from these settings and how they could be employed as a resource in contemporary architecture.

At the time of the study, eight of Bulawayo City Council's 29 Councillors were either not Ndebele or were not descendants of the original Mzilikazi/Mambo core Mthwakazi state. The sample of 10 Councillors selected from the remaining pool of 21 was way above the 10% threshold. They represented low and high density suburbs with a broad range of incomes. Key informants who were mainly elders in the Councillors' wards were identified through snowball sampling.

The discussions focused on how these individuals relate their identity to the natural and built form; how they conceptualise that identity in the context of the urban environment; how their identities fit into rural and urban settlements; and how Councillors implement policies that reflect the identities of the people they represent.

3. **Bulawayo United Residents' Association (BURA)** – These interviews aimed to determine how ordinary residents identify with their city. What makes them stay in the region and what do they identify with in the city and Matabeleland as a region? The respondents were identified by the BURA President and executive members.
4. **Mthwakazi Political and Cultural Activists:** This group was composed of political and cultural activists advocating for Mthwakazi self-determination. Their goal is to restore Mthwakazi culture and statehood. Snowball sampling was used to select key informants. Questionnaires were emailed to the majority because most are located outside the country due to political persecution and intimidation. Two of the ten groups were selected as a sample.
5. **Key isiNdebele academics and writers:** These respondents are influential with respect to isiNdebele's development as a culture and language. They have

written books and novels or published papers on amaNdebele history and culture. They were identified through snowball sampling. Two face-to-face interviews were conducted, with the rest carried out through email and WhatsApp focus group surveys.

6. **Students and academics.** This category mainly targeted Mthwakazi students inside and outside the country. The goal was to determine their understanding of the importance of Mthwakazi history and culture in teaching and learning in order to predict future developments with respect to built environments in Mthwakazi and Bulawayo in particular. Information was also obtained on the National University of Science and Technology School of Architecture's curriculum. This group of respondents was small due to the poor schooling system in Mthwakazi as a result of deliberate neglect by the ZANU-PF government as part of cultural genocide. Snowball sampling was used to identify key informants.
7. **Mthwakazi architects, surveyors, planners, civil engineers:** This group of respondents was also thinly spread. Snowball sampling was employed to identify respondents for face-to-face interviews and email and WhatsApp surveys and questionnaires.
8. **Ordinary Mthwakazi citizens.** Citizens that embrace Mthwakazi value systems were interviewed through WhatsApp focus groups. In the past few years, different forms of WhatsApp groups have been created for the restoration of the Mthwakazi Kingdom, including those linked to the activities of various aspirants to the throne such as King Mzilikazi II and Crown Prince Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo. It was assumed that they would understand basic Mthwakazi Afrocentric values.

It was further assumed that these clusters would have commonalities with respect to an envisioned Mthwakazi that the built environment would respond to. The amaNdebele cultural setting is depicted in Fig. 2.2.1 above which traces the boundary of what is historically referred to as the Mthwakazi Kingdom.

The researcher sought to determine the respondents' understanding of amaNdebele identity and the sources of that understanding. Respondents were typically asked to describe:

1. Their understanding of amaNdebele cosmology;
2. How they construe their world and how they feel it should be represented in the built environment, especially in civic spaces;
3. Briefly explain their image of contemporary Bulawayo;
4. Describe their favourite buildings in Bulawayo, giving reasons.

The case study was the Bulawayo Civic Precinct (maps provided in the Chapter Five) that was selected due to its inherent characteristics. Bulawayo does not have a civic centre of note besides the one in its Central Business District (CBD). The fieldwork study set out to ascertain whether Afrocentric system was considered in its making. The researcher sought to determine what placemaking and architectural considerations could have been considered in the design process of the space to give it an Afrocentric flair. Centenary Park (See Fig. 6.4.1 on pp. 346) is outside the CBD and the Civic Precinct prohibits individuals from walking or relaxing in its outdoor spaces.

### **2.2.3 Validity and credibility**

It is important that research data is valid. Validity implies that data has to be interpreted for its true meaning to be extracted and not taken at face value. Out-dated data is simply not valid, nor is data that is intended as a marketing gimmick (Elliotl, 2000: 49). Various methods were employed to triangulate the data from the field, including observation to counterbalance any bias that might be encountered in questionnaires and interviews.

The use of WhatsApp surveys and emails tends to promote credibility due to the researchers' influence on face-to-face surveys. This information was counterbalanced by face-to-face interviews that were also triangulated by means of observations.

#### **2.2.4 Ethical considerations**

The subject of Mthwakazi culture and built forms is a sensitive one to those in government. This highlighted the need to protect informants' identities and to ensure that the information provided remained confidential. Research designs should satisfy three requirements, namely, autonomy, non-maleficence and beneficence (Durrheim and Wassenaar, 1999: 66). The autonomy of all the respondents was respected and no harm was done to individuals or groups of respondents during data collection or the entire research process.

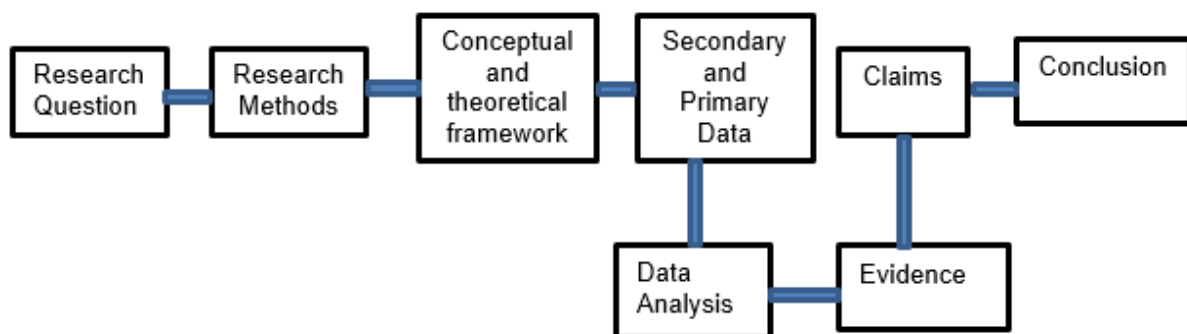
Voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents (See Appendix I) after they had received a full, non-technical and clear explanation of what would be expected of them. The informed consent form signed by the respondents also assured them of full confidentiality of the information supplied and that the results would be presented without compromising their rights.

This section discussed the contextual and philosophical issues relevant to this study which informed the identification of the clusters of respondents. All the samples constituted at least 10% of the population under study.

### **2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

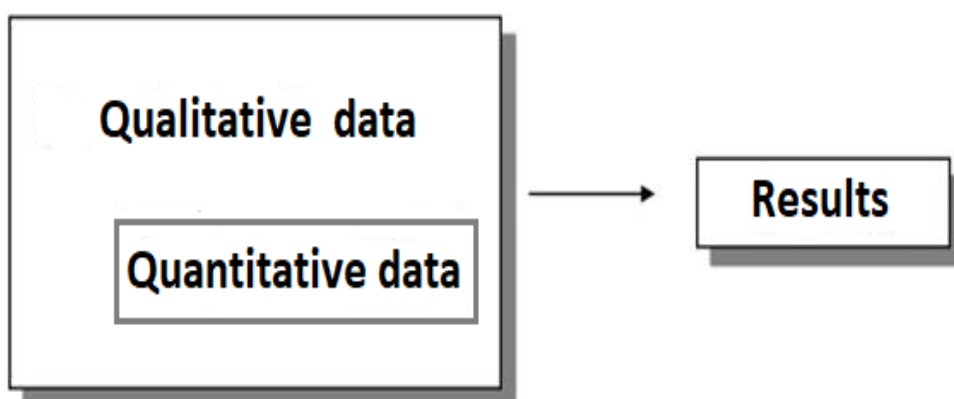
The study involved mixed methods research. The methodology for conducting research involves collecting, analysing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a longitudinal inquiry. A combination of qualitative and quantitative research provides a better understanding of a research problem or issue than either on its own (Creswell, 2008: 9). The study involved a philosophical examination of reality in relation to Afrocentric issues in the built environment. The process was informed by theoretical discussions in and around placemaking and identity conceptualisations.

Soanes and Stevenson (2005: 685) describe the mixed methods process as a basic structure that underlies a system, concept or text. In this study the framework was designed to support the integration of different elements of the research process to examine placemaking and architecture inspired by Afrocentric sources. Integration means combining and structuring different elements of the research process into a single, unified whole. Each element was treated without prejudice as they were all considered to be equally important. This study thus adopted a very simple structure adapted from Plowright (2011) (Fig. 2.3.1).



**Fig. 2.3.1: The Basic Structure of the Framework for an Integrated Methodology (FraIM) (Adapted from Plowright, 2011: 7)**

All the research questions were formulated within five contingent contexts although some were more important than others. These are: professional, organisational, policy, national and theoretical (Plowright, 2011: 8). In this study, the theoretical context was the main emphasis with the professional context coming close behind given the researcher's interest in the built environment.



**Fig. 2.3.2: Embedded data mixed method framework (adapted from Cameron, 2015)**

An embedded mixed methods design was employed with quantitative data being collected within a qualitative data collection approach (Fig. 2.3.2). In general, this research was exploratory; the emphasis was thus on qualitative data with embedded quantitative data. The exploration aimed to use prompts and indicators to provide insight into and pointers to Afrocentric sources that could be used as design generators in placemaking and architecture. It examined the making of traditional isiNdebele civic spaces and elements that could constitute a contemporary civic space in Bulawayo. Finally, it explored design possibilities that could have been used to ensure that the Civic Precinct responds to its Afrocentric context. The following section discusses the empirical data collection process.

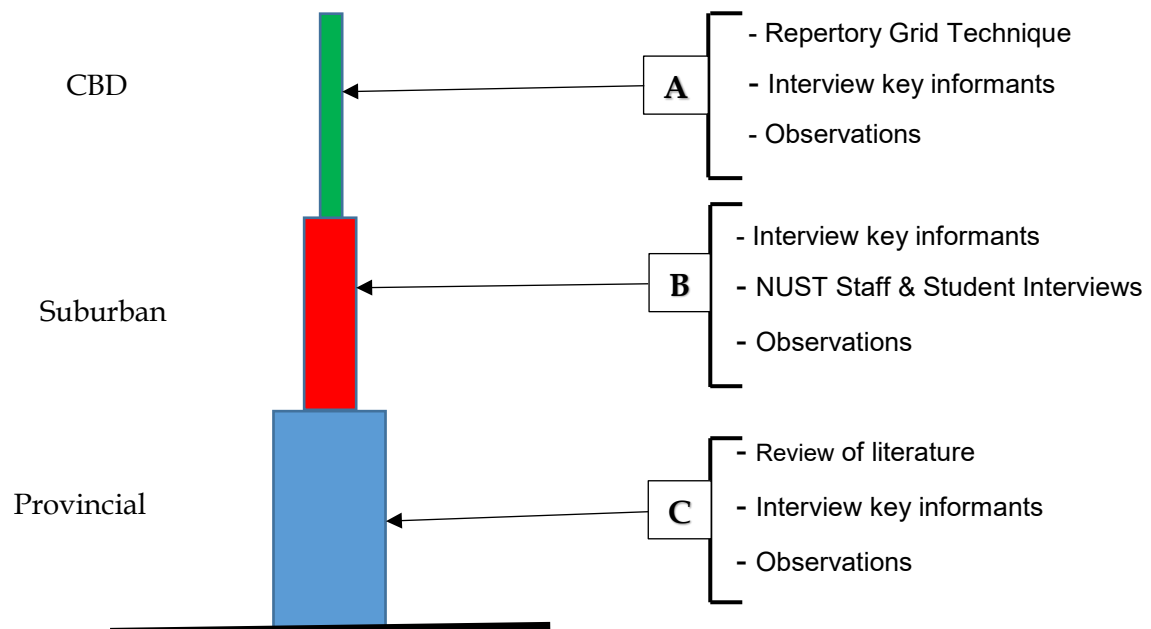
## 2.4 INVESTIGATION STRATEGIES

A case study was employed to probe issues relating to the identification of placemaking and architectural qualities derived from Afrocentric sources that could be used as identity generators of contemporary urbanism. The environs of Bulawayo include the provincial set-up, the city's suburbs and the CBD. The CBD is the areas in and around the civic precinct, i.e., the space surrounded by the Tower Block, Revenue Hall, City Hall and other buildings around the Tower Block civic outdoor space (See Fig. 6.4.2 A-E, page 348). Also included in the study were the outdoor spaces in and around the City Hall. Within the civic outdoor spaces was the car park which is often used for public gatherings such as rallies or protests by various political and civic entities.

Various data gathering techniques were used within this urban civic space to investigate how placemaking and architecture could be inspired by Afrocentric sources and their potential contribution to the identity development of contemporary outdoor spaces such as the ones in question. The fieldwork focused on the following five main issues:

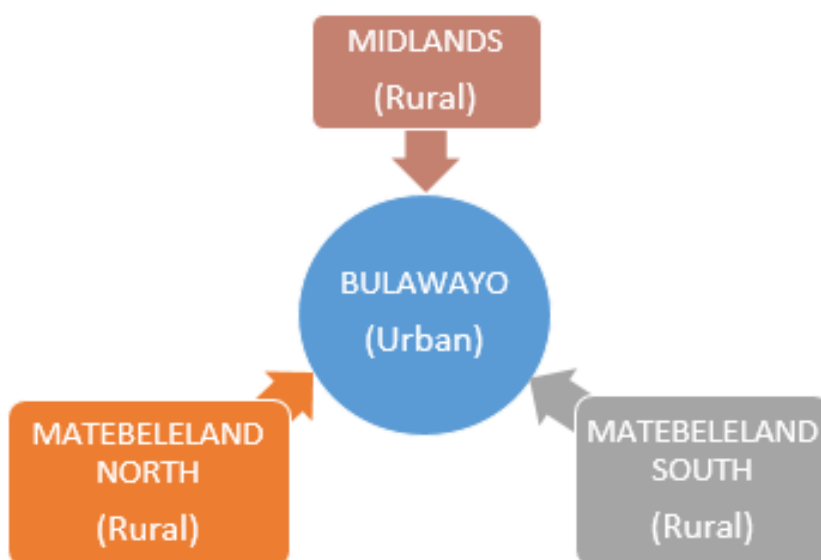
1. Identification of traditional civic spaces and forms (local Afrocentric sources)
2. How the respondents perceived the identity of Afrocentric civic spaces and buildings

3. What civic space and building elements best reflected them as individuals and collectively
4. Identification of colonial civic spaces
5. Identification of post-colonial civic spaces and built forms



**Fig. 2.3.3: Strategy for fieldwork investigation and analysis (Author)**

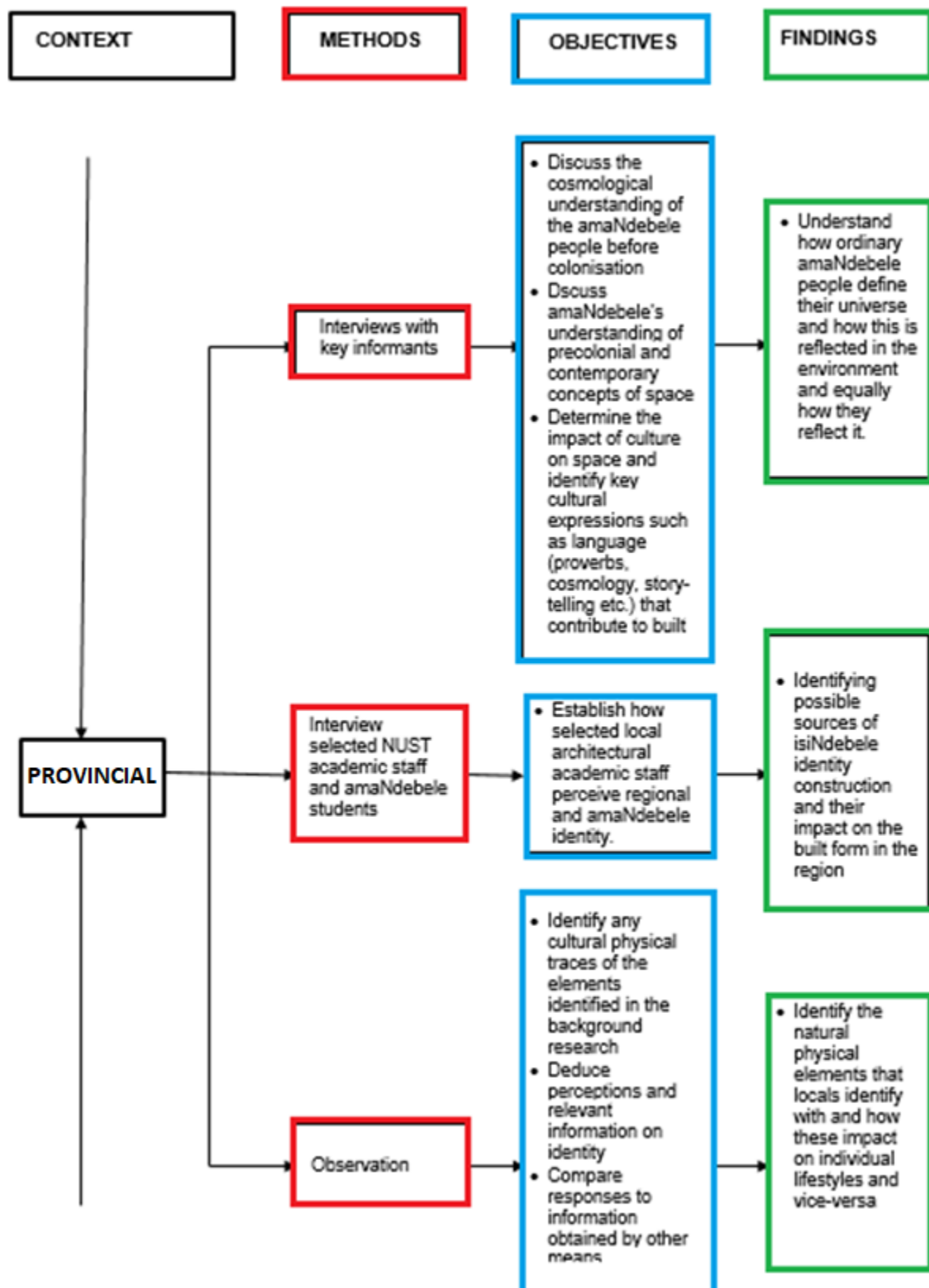
As shown in Figure 2.3.3, there were three levels of investigation: regional, key rural and suburban areas and the CBD (around identified civic spaces) with an emphasis on traditionality with respect to culture and the built form.



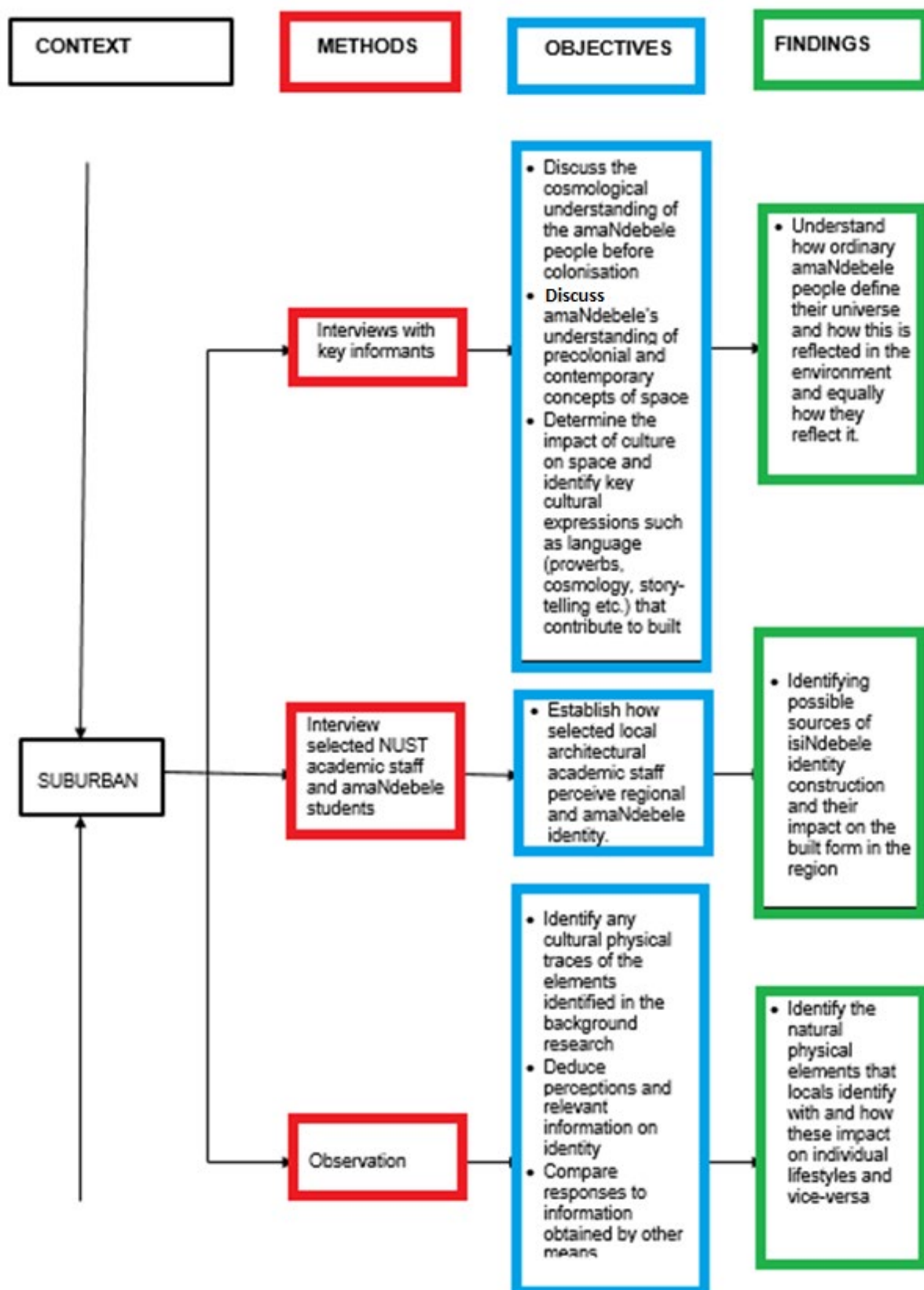
**Fig. 2.3.4: Study areas following a traditional/rural - urban relationship (Author)**

The research thus began with a global perspective and moved to a local and specific context. The fieldwork strategy followed a similar approach.

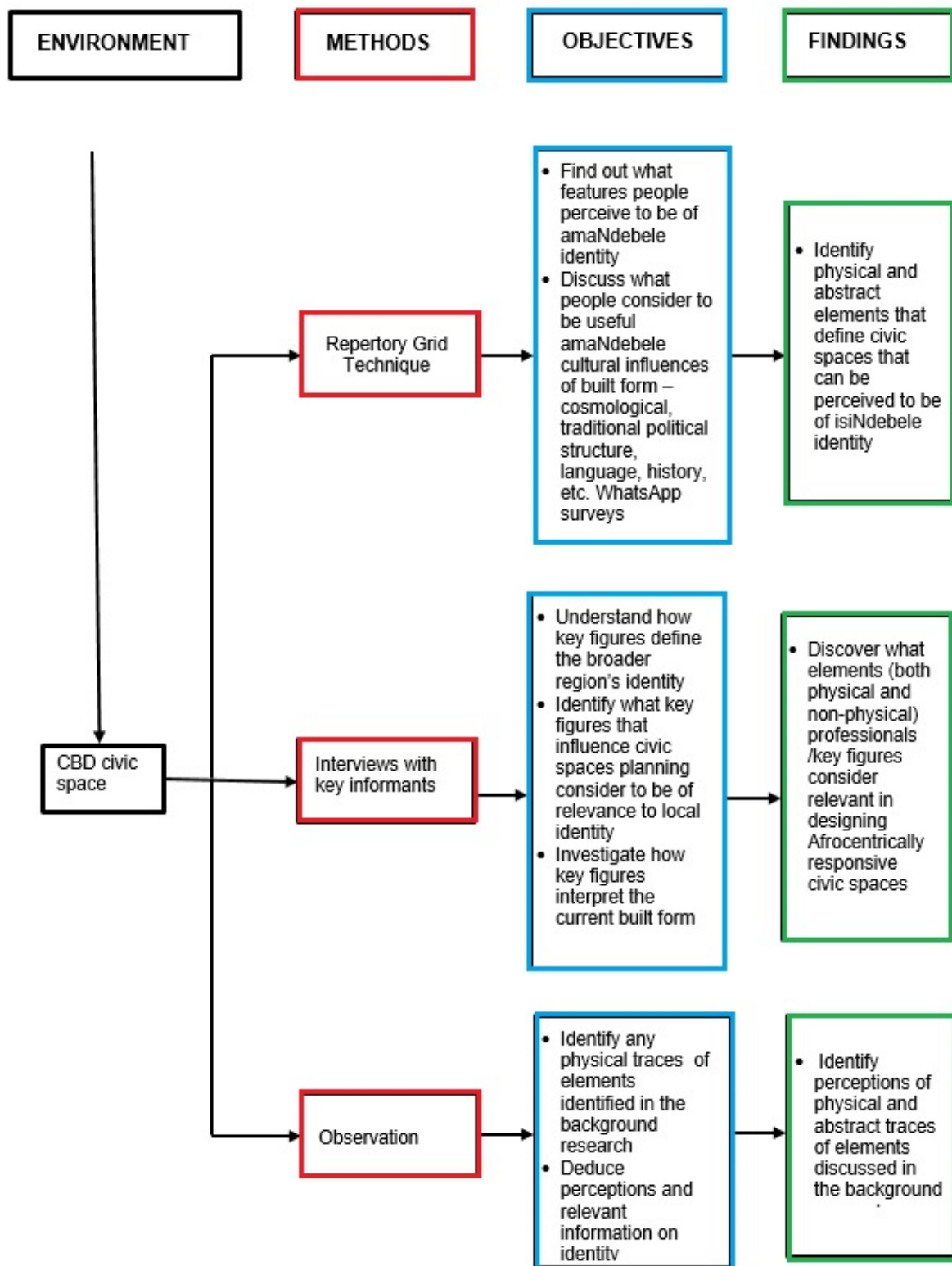




#### A Province (Informant Clusters 1 and 2)



**B** Suburbs (Informant Clusters 3, 4 and 8)



**C City Centre (Informant Clusters 5, 6 and 7)**

**Fig. 2.3.5: Fieldwork research methods (Author)**

The intended outcome was the other way round, with local identity being expressed beyond the local.

Settlement plans around the respondents' residences were mapped in order to identify Afrocentric sources that would contribute to the generation of contemporary civic spaces. Data collection commenced in traditional environments and moved to modern ones as defined by Amos Rapoport and Hardie (1991: 35 – 61). This was done to identify what he calls culture-core elements. Hence, the research areas were classified into the three provinces that straddle the historical Mthwakazi Kingdom: Matabeleland South, Matabeleland North, Midlands, and Bulawayo. The data collection methods are summarised in Figs. 2.3.4 and 2.3.5.

## 2.5 REGIONAL AFROCENTRIC SOURCES

Many formerly colonised countries are a conglomerate of tribes and sub-tribes that fell under the colonial boundaries that were mainly defined during the Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa and after the First and Second World Wars (Oliver and Atmore, 2002). Zimbabwe's current boundaries were part of the geographical mass assigned to Cecil John Rhodes' British South Africa Company for exploration and expropriation. A European-only referendum in 1923 resulted in the forced union of Mashonaland and Mthwakazi and the country was named Rhodesia, with the land north of the Zambezi River known as Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). These lands were seized by trickery and/or the use of force.

After independence, peoples whose languages and cultures were different had to find a common identity. The question is whether they succeeded in doing so. One of the objectives of the fieldwork for this study was to clarify the historical and cultural identities that constitute Zimbabwe. The cosmological orientation of the majority of the people of Matabeleland is influenced by Mthwakazi history, culture and customs. This stage of data collection thus began with a review of the literature on amaNdebele history, culture and customs in the greater Zimbabwean landscape with respect to an

Afrocentric cosmological orientation and an emphasis on precolonial conditions. In a globalised world, many factors have impacted on precolonial cultures and the fieldwork aimed to identify elements that have survived.

This section considers data gathered from influential figures in the Matabeleland region. Most of those interviewed had a good understanding of Mthwakazi culture. Race, religion and tribe were not factors in the selection process; rather, in line with theorists such as Molefe Kete Asante (2007; 2008), among others, the main criterion was that they subscribed to Afrocentric values. These individuals clearly identified with isiNdebele culture and customs and had a fair understanding of how the environment (natural or built) reflects and expresses self.

The Repertory Grid Technique was the main data collection technique, especially in relation to the semi-structured interviews with individuals. The aim was to identify Afrocentric placemaking and architecture drawn from isiNdebele culture and customs and their potential application in the design of civic spaces that exude local identity.

The symbolic interaction theory informed the data collection method. Given that human beings, as individuals or a collective, express their identity in various ways, this fieldwork focused on artists and writers and how they describe the environment (natural or built; physical or abstract).

Data were gathered on cultural artefacts, language (myths, metaphors, poems, proverbs, and storytelling), literature, art and drawings as well as writing on issues such as cosmology, isiNdebele social stratification etc. by key isiNdebele writers and how these describe the built environment.

The key informants were individuals at provincial level that might be influential in the development of isiNdebele as a culture and language that could act as the driver of the built form.

A minimum of 10 percent of the key informants were chosen from each identified category in order to avoid repetition of information. They included historians, novelists, linguists, musicians and academics at higher education institutions where isiNdebele

is taught. Convenience sampling was employed that offered access to participants who were conveniently located (Plowright, 2011: 43).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using prepared questions (Appendix II). The aim was to gain insight into the respondents' understanding of broader issues around Mthwakazi identity and draw parallels with the built form with a specific focus on civic spaces.

It is important to understand the context one is dealing with; hence, the regional approach to the case study and the issues investigated. The level of mediation is a 'between-methods' characteristic and the degree of structure can be described as a 'within-methods' one (Plowright, 2011: 50). Observation has a low level of mediation whilst artefacts analysis is at the opposite extreme due to the participant being relatively closer in time and space to the events under study (ibid). Observation was used due to its ability to compare and contrast with data gathered by means of other methods as well as clarify issues that might have been raised in the background research or research questions. Given the sensitivities of the political environment in Zimbabwe, the researcher assumed full-observer status in scanning key relevant regional physical environmental features. This meant covert observation where the participants were unaware that they were part of the research. Convenience sampling was also used in this instance and data gathering entailed driving around the region in key areas. The purpose was to develop a basis for using Afrocentricity to identify placemaking elements that could be deployed in the design of civic spaces to create truly African built environments that reflect local identity. Structural and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Structural analysis is appropriate in analysing personal stories and proverbs since these can be treated as story texts rather than storytelling. As argued by Christine Bold (2012: 126), this method is rigorous and detailed; it splits sentences into clauses and assigns each clause to the following five categories:

1. (A) Abstract - what is the story about?
2. (O) Orientation – who, when and where?
3. (CA) Complicating action – then what happened?

4. (E) Evaluation – So what?
5. (R) Result – what finally happened?

The categories are best understood as questions that the narrative is answering, with the sixth category, code (C), being another way of ending the narrative. It does not ask a question but makes a statement (Bold, 2012: 127). This sixth category has sub-categories whose purposes are:

- To identify the relative effectiveness and completeness of the narrative structure amongst subgroups of the population;
- To analyse the more complex traditional narratives told by storytellers.

The analysis was tied to Bulawayo as the context. This method was adjusted to suit the specifics determined by the methodology (Appendix II).

The term thematic experience analysis encompasses two ideas: that the researcher is seeking and identifying themes (or not) within the narratives; and that experiences usually involve relationships between people and contexts (Bold, 2012: 129). Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes from various categories of respondents and the data collected in order to understand the regional context of the selected case study with respect to local identity issues. This approach is most effective if one defines a clear research focus from the onset and the interview questions lead the interviewee in providing the required information (Bold, 2012: 131). For this reason, an interview schedule was prepared in advance of the fieldwork.

## 2.6 AFROCENTRIC SOURCES - THE SUBURBAN CONTEXT

The City of Bulawayo was selected as the case study for the following reasons:

- Its level of urbanity. Bulawayo is the regional capital of Mthwakazi and the second largest city in Zimbabwe.

- The researcher hails from the city and it was thus easy to access the selected civic spaces.
- The researcher's familiarity with the main language and culture in the region made it easier to obtain the information required for this research study.

This category of respondents was selected due to their knowledge of isiNdebele culture and customs. In most traditional societies, elders are considered to be the custodians of cultural knowledge. Their input was thus regarded as invaluable. Ten respondents over the age of 65 were selected in order to obtain qualitative data and avoid repetition. The objective was to tap institutional cultural knowledge that is likely to impact on the overall contemporary design of civic spaces.

While the information provided by elders reflected the traditionality of the City of Bulawayo, the study is ultimately about the future of the city whose designers will be graduates from schools of architecture. Final year students were thus interviewed to determine their familiarity with isiNdebele culture and customs and how that knowledge could be used to design contemporary Afrocentric civic spaces in the city. Architecture students are already involved in research on various subjects; the researcher thus examined their understanding of Afrocentric sources for identity construction in Bulawayo and its environs.

It should be noted that, while each person's construct system is personal and unique, there is also a degree of shared meaning (Senan, 1993: 103). The purpose of including this group of informants was to get a sense of the future in as far as Mthwakazi architecture is concerned. What elements are current students likely to deploy in designing amaNdebele civic spaces and what are the underlying drivers of their design processes? Inferences were drawn from the students' views. The methods used in the regional aspect of the fieldwork were also employed here with the focus on civic spaces in both rural and urban environments. The solicited responses were compared with what the researcher observed on the ground. Given time constraints and the need to cover a broad spectrum of the built environment, convenience sampling was employed. Observation was carried out in civic spaces in the rural and suburban environs of Bulawayo.



Data analysis entailed coding various elements picked up from student research, elders' narratives and the researcher's observations. This enabled the compilation of a schedule of Afrocentric sources that would inspire placemaking and architecture. For example, if a placemaking and architectural elements could be identified as being drawn from an African culture and identity it would be recognized as such. The researcher explored how it could be employed in the contemporary design of civic spaces to reflect local identity. Similarly, if it was drawn from a cosmological system, it would be identified and categorized according to how it could potentially be used in the contemporary design of civic spaces that exude local identity.

In summary, four data collection methods were employed, namely, interviews with key informants and elders, WhatsApp surveys of respondents from selected social groups, the Repertory Grid Technique and observation. These methods covered three broad areas: the region, rural and suburban areas and the case study area, the Bulawayo CBD. In general, the aim was to identify Afrocentric placemaking and architecture motivated by Afrocentric sources and how these could be used as identity generators in the contemporary design of the urban built form with a specific focus on the making of civic spaces.

## 2.7 DEFINING AFROCENTRICITY OF CIVIC SPACES

The aim of this stage of data collection was to understand the past and project the future, i.e., to construe, interpret or give meaning to the future. This was the basis for the definition of personal constructs. To construe is both to abstract from past events, and to provide a reference axis for anticipating future events based on that abstraction (Bradshaw, Ford, Adams-Webber, and Boose, 1993: 289). The researcher aimed to identify placemaking and architectural makings drawn from Afrocentric sources that could be useful for a civic space such as the Bulawayo Civic Precinct. What makings currently exist and how do they contrast with what could be used for such spaces in designing civic spaces that respond to Afrocentricity with specific reference to isiNdebele culture and customs? The purpose was to give meaning to isiNdebele cosmology, culture, and customs in built form.

The repertory grid technique is underpinned by the Personal Construct theory which is based on research by George Kelly (Bradshaw, Ford, Adams-webber, Boose, 1993: 288). A Repertory Grid Technique is a semi-structured interview tool that explores how individuals construct the world around them (Tomico, Karapanos, Levy, Mizutani, Yamanaka, 2009: 56). This study employed this technique to gather information on how the respondents perceive or interpret the isiNdebele world view and knowledge which could be used to identify design generators of the built form, especially civic spaces. The repertory grid identifies the ways in which individuals construe their experience. How do individuals draw meaning from isiNdebele cultural, social, and cosmological sources and how can this be used as the basis for the design of isiNdebele built forms?

A full repertory grid contains three components: “elements”, which define the material upon which the grid is based; “constructs” that are the ways that the subject groups and differentiates between the elements; and a “linking” mechanism” which shows how each element is assessed in each construct (Easterby-Smith, 1980: 4). Constructs are the ways in which an individual makes sense of, or construes the elements. They are frequently expressions of intuition, “gut feeling”, and perceptions, which the individual uses as a guide to action, without necessarily having explicitly verbalised them prior to the interview (Bjorklund, 2005: 5).

The Repertory Grid Technique offers a number of advantages such as ease of administration, flexibility, a high degree of personalisation and simplicity of structure (Curtis, Wells, Lowry, Higbee, 2008). This method was appropriate because it allowed the respondents to express themselves and build their own constructs, thus enabling the researcher to access views from users’ perspectives.

All the selected respondents were assumed to be knowledgeable with respect to shaping and creating built environments, especially civic spaces. Convenience sampling was employed to select the sample (Plowright, 2011: 43). This stage of fieldwork gathered information on the case study through direct observation of the physical characteristics of the built environment. Observation was undertaken in and around the Civic Centre precinct and included building typologies, materials used,

vegetation, public outdoor circulation routes, roads, etc. The observation was used to confirm or affirm the constructs that emerged using the Repertory Grid Technique.

Each respondent's construction of how they perceive their environment was unique and personal. However, some commonalities arose. Two methods are used to analyse grids, namely, constructs content and cognitive structure (Senan, 1993: 103).

## 2.8 QUALITY AND CREDIBILITY

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement and results. This means that the same outcome would be obtained if the survey were to be repeated with the same sample on a different occasion (Elliott, 2000: 53). Reliability also implies that another researcher asking the same questions in the same setting would arrive at essentially the same results (although not an identical interpretation) (Blaxter, Hughes, Tight, 2001: 221).

It was anticipated that issues and questions would arise during the data collection process and a number of methods were employed to cover as broad a base as possible. Reliability and credibility were enhanced through:

- Triangulation
- Allowing the respondents to construct their own understanding of the environment
- Identification of the methods' strengths and weaknesses
- Objectivity
- Contextualisation of data

Validity implies the use of methods, approaches and techniques that relate to, or measure, the issues the researcher intended to explore (ibid). This fieldwork investigation employed appropriate methods to address the research questions and thus minimise bias and increase validity.

## 2.9 ANTICIPATED FIELDWORK CHALLENGES

All fieldwork confronts inherent difficulties. Taking photographs is considered to be subversive in most contexts in Zimbabwe, especially around government buildings. The topic of tribal identity can also be very sensitive. Fortunately, the researcher is fluent in both major languages in the country i.e., isiNdebele and chiShona and this was a good starting point.

The author anticipated that more problems would be experienced in rural settings especially as the country was approaching an election in 2018. An elderly research assistant was employed to ease communication with the elderly and authorities in rural communities. The assistant received training on how to report our presence in the area and fully disclose the aim of the research and its long-term benefit to the community.

## 2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the methods employed to gather data and the different cohorts of informants. The data collected was analysed to identify placemaking and architectural makings derived from Afrocentric sources that could be employed as part of the design processes of civic spaces in the region that radiate local identity.

Various data collection methods were used to achieve a sound and unbiased understanding of the constituents of local identity insofar as the built environment is concerned. These included the Repertory Grid Technique and interviews, supported by observation and surveys of selected informants.

The following chapter expands on the theoretical and conceptual issues raised in Chapter One and presents a literature review based on the philosophical considerations discussed earlier in this chapter.

# CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL BASIS FOR IDENTIFICATION OF AFROCENTRIC SOURCES

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study sought to identify placemaking and architectural elements drawn from Afrocentric sources that could be employed as design generators of contemporary built forms with a focus on urban settings. This chapter begins by exploring what placemaking entails and the concept of identity which is viewed from a broad perspective and context down to African settings. Identity conceptualisation is construed as a mediator or communication conduit between Afrocentricity and post-independence architecture. It can be considered to be the pinnacle of self-definition. Like the virtual image produced in a mirror, the 'self' is both present and not present in the 'other', yet the 'self' requires the 'other'. The issue of the 'self' and the 'other' is a complex one as they are not mutually exclusive (Bandyopadhyay and Montiel, 2013: xiv).

Architecture and the built environment have always played a key role in defining social and political identity and have also attracted criticism for failing to capture the distinctiveness of diverse groups (Vale, 1992). The Sri Lankan Parliamentary Building is one such example with respect to Tamil and Buddhist groups (Vale, 1992: 190 - 208; Mthethwa, 2011). Construction and representation of meaning through the interplay of placemaking, art and architecture, and collective memory have always given shape to expressive intent and have consequently embodied identity within the built environment (Bandyopadhyay and Montiel, 2013: xiv).

### 3.2 DEFINITION OF PLACEMAKING

Spaces provide for socialisation and, as argued by Neil Leach (in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 297 – 314), they can only be successful if people identify with them. Smith and Bugni (2006: 123-155) argue that spaces should be a reflection/expression of users and vice-versa. Given that this research focuses on Afrocentricity, civic spaces should employ placemaking elements that are reflective and expressive of this phenomenon.

Ownership of civic spaces is collective and not confined to individual persons or class or corporation, but people as a whole (Ghirardo, 1996: 43). Ghirardo further argues that what is often seen as publicly accessible places such as parks, shopping malls, festival market places etc., are in essence social spaces (ibid). It therefore suggests the social nature of civic spaces and therefore the identity of those places is reflected by the users as is argued by Leach (in Hillier and Rooksby, 1996: 301 – 307). This therefore introduces a sense of belonging for the user as a group. These spaces therefore are creations that symbolise belonging for those who socialise in them and hence they assume that social identity (Jenkins, 2008: 132 – 147). Due to the scale of civic spaces and their complexity they then assume importance phenomenally when it comes to socialisation and the associated group or social identity. Successfully designed places attract people and encourage them to linger and return. People animate places by their very presence, both creating and reflecting urban vitality (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 15).

If spaces are successfully designed they engender a quality that attract users to it and therefore create a strong sense of belonging. The images that the civic spaces repudiate, the spatial use, general spatial ambience, colour, and even texture, all contribute towards the identity of the place. This phenomenon of attachment to a place therefore introduces a sense of how people perceive it. If it is perceived positively the sense of belonging becomes stronger with the opposite being on the affirmative.

Placemaking as a concept requires clarification of the concepts of space and place. This in turn lays the foundation for the identification of placemaking elements in architectural and urban design.

D. K. Ching's (1979) conceptualisation of space builds on Zevi Bruno's perspectives. In "Architecture As Space" (1957) he argued that facades and cross-sections of exteriors and interiors serve to measure height (Zevi, 1957: 22). However, architecture is not only the sum total of the height and width of the structural elements that enclose a space but also the void itself, the enclosed space in which people live and move (ibid). Zevi's thesis was based on the premise that a satisfactory history of architecture had yet to be written due to historians' failure to apply a coherent method in studying buildings from a spatial perspective.

Zevi thus argued that space is the protagonist of architecture – the central character, main player, hero, or champion. No matter how beautiful the facades and walls of a house, church or place, they are only the container, the box formed by the wall: *the content is the internal space* (Zevi, 1959: 24). Zevi (1958: 25 – 26) identified four dimensions of space, namely, height, width, depth and time; his definition of architecture thus pivots around interior space. Since every architectural volume and every wall constitutes a boundary, a pause in the continuity of space, every building functions in two kinds of space: its internal space, completely defined by the building itself, and its external or urban space, defined by that building and others around it (Zevi, 1958: 30).

In this conceptualisation of space, the human factor is evident in the fourth dimension – how human beings experience space .... people moving about within the building and studying it from successive views (Zevi, 1958: 27). Zevi (1958: 30) not only defined architecture with respect to interior space that attracts human beings, but also argued that even if decoration and economic, social and technical factors are ignored, space on its own is not sufficient to define it. Modernism, with its emphasis on the volumetric values of architecture, and the Organic Movement, with its focus on space, fell short due to a lack of consideration of these secondary factors that constitute the making of architecture.

The concepts of space and place can be very confusing; hence, the need to clarify them. Place makes one think primarily of restricted dimensions, a play area, balcony, or study niche, born of articulation, large enough to contain several people and small enough to provide the necessary cover (Hertzberger, 2010: 24). Hertzberger (ibid) argues that places can also be large, as long as they are suited to whatever is to be enacted in them. In this argument, place is pivoted around self. It is a phenomenon associated with self, with familiarity and hence security and refuge. A collective place is then one where a large number of people feel safe to commune and bond around a shared goal. In other words a place is a special value added to space.

Whatever its purpose, space can come to mean place, whether for individuals or for small or large groups (ibid). Thus, it can be argued that space is a bounded or purposeful void with the potential to physically link things; it only becomes place when it is given a contextual meaning derived from cultural or regional context (Trancik, 1986, 112). Architects can therefore only design conditions that make space fit to be read as a place, that is, by supplying those dimensions or rather the articulation and cover that in a certain situation bring about the right sense of appropriateness and recognition (Hertzberger, 2010, 24). When one is making a place, they are in fact making the space in such a way that the conditions for its infill endow it with the quality of place (ibid).

Trancik (1986) and Unwin's (2009) conceptual approaches to space and place are not as diametrically opposed as they might first appear to be. Extending Unwin's (2009: 32) definition of place, the moment the mind touches the world, space has been defined whilst Trancik defines place as a space that has been given a context.

Therefore, the conceptualisation that this research study adopts is that of place being a space that is bequeathed with human activities. It is these definers, the demarcation of human activities that need to be studied further as a basis for placemaking and architecture.

Zevi (1958), Trancik (1986) Ching (2007), and Hertzberger's (2010) approaches to the concept of space can be viewed through a single lens that defines space as a void



whose boundary definition gives rise to architecture – with space playing a starring role. The boundaries can be defined physically or abstractly.

Unwin's approach to the concept of place has more practical implications that stem from architecture being considered as identification of place. The moment boundaries are placed around where the mind touches the world – architecture is born – it becomes an identification element for that particular place. One would then consider placemaking to be the act of identification of a space to accommodate human activities. In that case, placemaking and architecture are the delineators of human activities.

Human activities are about how people live their daily lives; places thus derive their meaning and values from people's activities as without them, they would remain mere elements of space defined by physical characteristics alone (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 11). A beach fan park brimming with revellers listening and dancing to Mandoza belting out his kwaito music on stage represents a place, while an empty music stage on the beachfront is a representation of a space. In other words, place is socially constructed and places are appreciated individually and characterised by social interactions (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 11). From the conceptualisation arrived at in the previous section, placemaking and architecture are then considered to be physical or abstract boundaries that delineate human activities in space.

Whether simple or complex, places accommodate *humans*, the things *they* do, and *their* possessions; they provide the frames in which *they* exist and act. Designing spaces that ultimately become places is a huge responsibility and those that organise the world (or part of it) into places for others (*or themselves*) have a profound responsibility (Unwin, 2009: 30).

For architects and urban designers, organising the world into places entails more than just composing architectural elements – creating/designing spaces – it demands an understanding of all role players and harmonising their aspirations, beliefs, and worldviews, etc. Fig. 3.2.1 presents an example of the role players in the making of a beachfront music concert fan park into a place.

Successful places generally derive not from individual pieces of architecture, however well designed, but from explicit attention to the totality of the place (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 12). Success depends on the creation of self-sustaining places using a placemaking strategy that is community-based rather than imposed and implemented by city leaders, planners, architects or urban designers. In this regard, community participation is at the climax of placemaking. This links to the concept of collective centred places.



Fig. 3.2.1: Stakeholders in the making of a beachfront music concert fan park as a place (myrtlebeach.com. – Google, accessed 12 October 2015 - and Overall illustration: Author)

The manner in which human beings perceive space begins in the confines and safety of home. As Heidegger argues in *Being and time* (1927), *being*, as the infinitive signifies to “reside alongside”; *to be familiar with* (2005: 80) while the fundamental aspect of a dwelling, as he explains in the essay *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1951), is “staying with and taking care of things” (Colombino, 2012: 23). Laura Colombino (2012: 23) built on this notion by stating that the line drawn around one’s place is what enables things to belong to that place and, therefore, be released from the disquieting space outside. This line becomes what this study calls an individual’s delineated centre.

Cliff Moughtin (2003: 89) argues that the idea of a centre is applied to the known and friendly world, as opposed to the undifferentiated outside and often hostile world. Each group has its centre. The centre of the Muslim world is Mecca and that of Catholic world is the Vatican in Rome; while Judaism is centred around Jerusalem (*ibid*). This symbolises collective as opposed to individual centredness – public versus home. Similarly public spaces are centres of communities and it therefore makes sense that they should participate in the makings of these places. There are four elements of placemaking: uses/activities; access/linkages; comfort/image and sociability (Fig. 3.2.2).

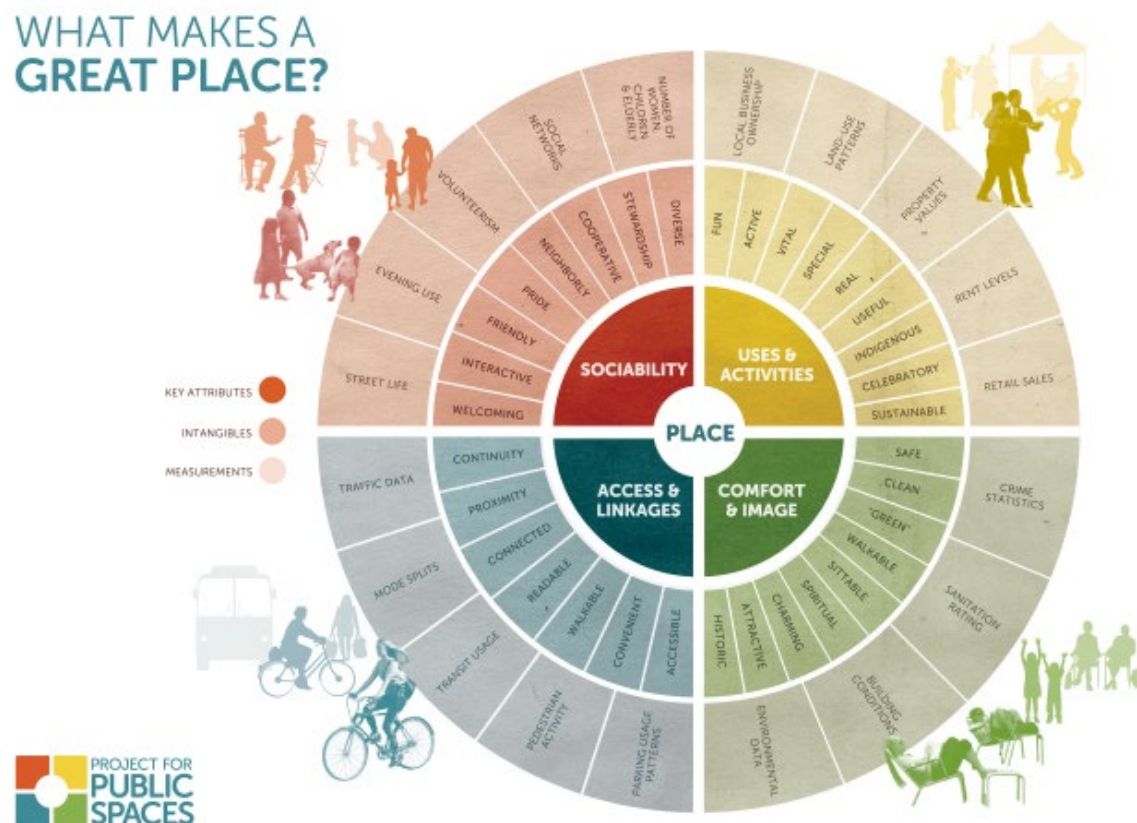


Fig. 3.2.2: Placemaking factors. (<https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>)

The basic elements of architecture described by Vitruvius, namely, commodity, firmness and delight, are very applicable to placemaking. David Adams and Steve Tiesdell (2012: 13) proposed a fourth element, economy, not only in the financial sense but the broader one of minimising environmental costs.

It can be argued that successful places are:

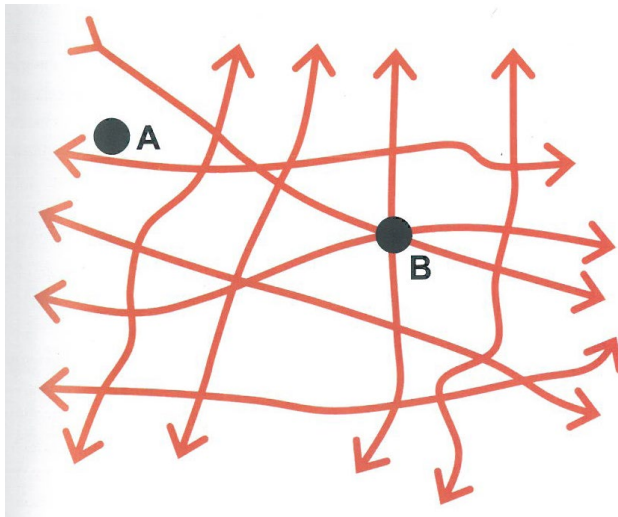
- Meant for people
- Well-connected and permeable
- Of mixed-use and varied density
- Distinctive
- Sustainable, resilient and robust (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 10).

Successful places attract people, and encourage them to linger and return (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 15). As discussed earlier, places are spaces that have been endowed with human activities. It is these activities that attract people to spaces and thus create places. A continuous human presence in spaces creates vibrant places; this can be achieved through spaces that accommodate diverse activities: shops of different sizes, restaurants and bars with different prices and quality and indoor and outdoor spaces that allow for chance meetings and chats. Street life is enhanced by indoor and outdoor activities that create an ambience in spaces (Plate 3.2.1).



**Plate 3.2.1: A busy street in Harajuku, Japan showing how people turn spaces into places through engaging in diverse activities (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 15)**

Busy streets are more reassuring than deserted parks and other civic spaces. The basic idea is to provide an all-weather environment. Outdoor spaces that function day and night are preferable as public spaces than exclusively day ones. Spaces thus have to be designed in a manner that accommodates activities that run into the night.



Places are more likely to be successful if they enable people to move in and through them with ease. Well-designed movement frameworks open up areas, connect locations and permit people to move between them by the most direct route (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 17).

**Fig. 3.2.3: Destination B is favourably located due to its centrality (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 17).**

Places that are widely used and easy to follow encourage navigation and make people feel safe both on foot and cycling. Improved connectivity across the city and a layout that facilitates quick thoroughfares reinforce urban vitality, since shops, cafes and leisure facilities have to be appropriately located along the width and breath of these routes.

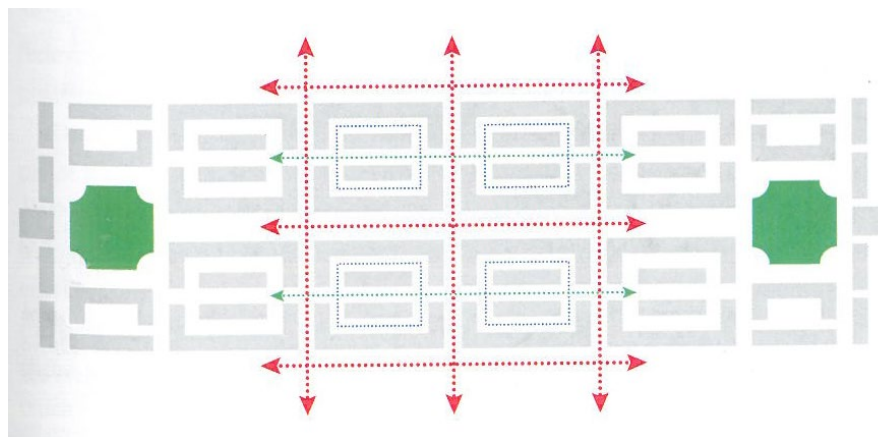
Destination A can only be accessed by people who specifically want to go there, while Destination B is situated along the movement of a series of routes and is therefore best suited for activities such as bars, restaurants, shops, etc. that also seek to benefit from people passing by – it is a nodal point (Fig. 3.2.3). Successful places also encourage and enable travel by public transport, by bringing fast and efficient transit systems, such as light rail, close to where people want to go (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 19).

Urban designers contend that connectivity and permeability can be achieved through a grid system (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013). The grid provides a simple structure that allows access throughout the area. The New Urbanist movement in the US is a fervent promoter of interconnectivity; this is exemplified by the concept of traditional neighbourhood developments. This is the thinking behind master-planned contemporary developments that create a modern urban form that is street orientated and defined by urban blocks, usually of low- or medium-rise structures and buildings. The urban form it produces stands in sharp contrast to the modernist view of setting

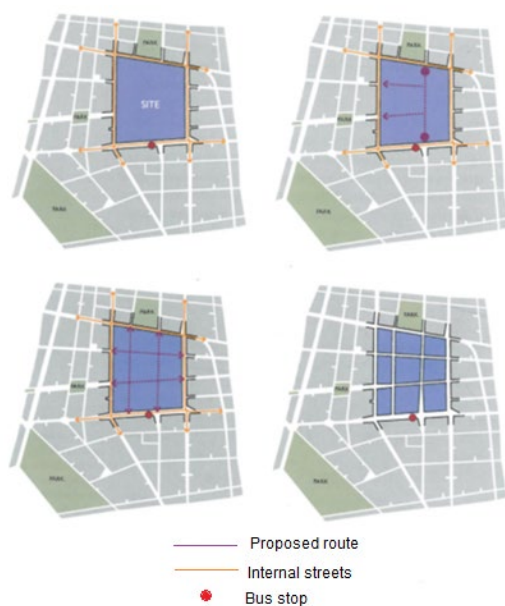


buildings as individual ‘objects in space’ surrounded, at best by landscaped parkland and, at worst, by expensive car parking and patches of poorly maintained ‘left-over’ land. Street oriented blocks create a much more dense urban fabric in which the continuous façade of buildings serves to define and enclose space by setting a clearer boundary between the public realm of the street or urban square and the private realm of the buildings themselves (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 19).

The width and depth of blocks can vary to encourage diverse activities. As the New Town shows, successful blocks may supplement the ‘primary mesh’ intended for principal movement with a ‘secondary mesh’ of service lanes or alleys through the centre of blocks, and even a ‘tertiary mesh’ for circulation within the blocks (Fig. 3.2.4).



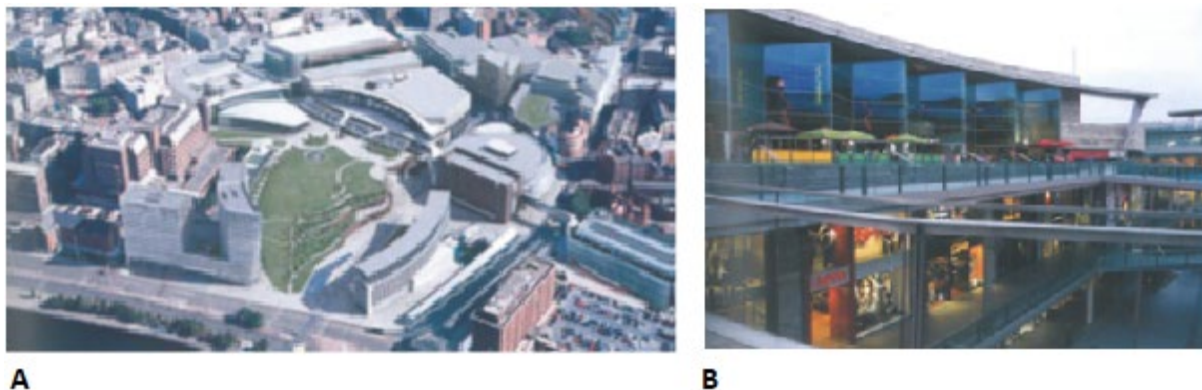
**Fig. 3.2.4: Movement patterns within blocks.** This stylized plan shows the three circulation meshes in James Craig’s plan for Edinburgh New Town. Green arrows are a ‘secondary mesh’, red, primary and blue, tertiary (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 19).



**Fig. 3.2.5: Urban healing through redevelopment.** The second drawing shows the cul-de-sac that defeats connectivity efforts which are achieved in the third drawing (Source: Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 20)

The secondary mesh in this proposed scheme is an important pedestrian thoroughfare and the location for small shops, bars and restaurants. Large-scale master-planning provides unrivalled opportunities for creating well-connected and permeable places but would require the demolition of existing structures. The Urban Design Compendium (Fig. 3.2.5) illustrates opportunities for connectivity, with the third drawing offering thoroughfares for pedestrians through the newly-developed urban scheme in Leeds.

The award-winning Liverpool One development provides another example where the principles of connectivity and permeability have been applied to create successful places. Liverpool One was conceived not as one large development but as six districts of varying individuality with each having their own distinctive character, knitting the heritage and streetscape of the past with the contemporary urban fabric (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 21) (See Plate 3.2.2).



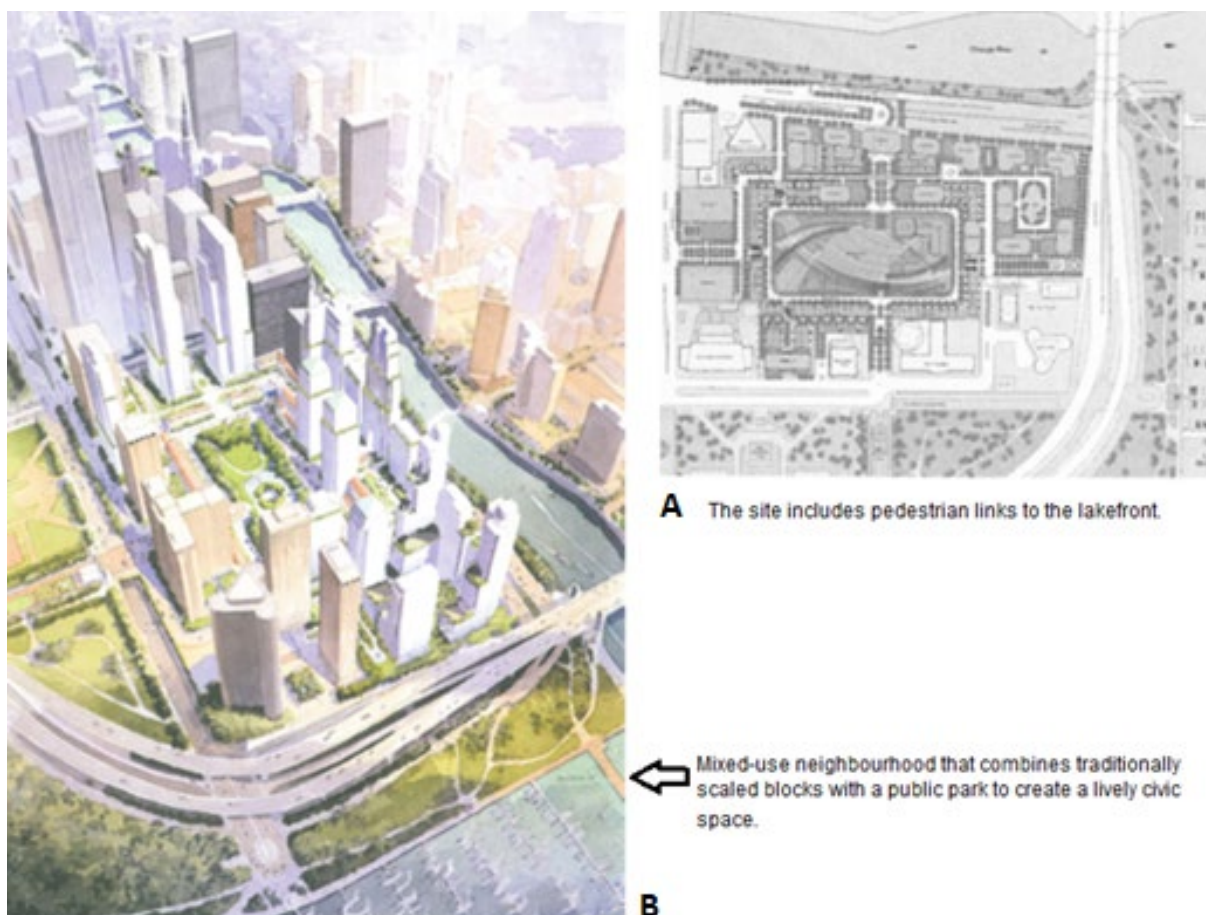
**A** **B**  
**Plate 3.2.2: Areal view of Liverpool One (A) – an award-winning scheme built on the edge of the city centre providing a mixture of retail, leisure, commercial and residential facilities. Views onto the street show a retail and leisure terrace (B). (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 21)**

The Lakeshore East Master Plan in Chicago, Illinois by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Urban Designers also created successful places through mixed-use development strategies (Fig. 3.2.6). The scheme was sponsored by private developers, Magellan Development Group Ltd and Near North Properties Inc. Economic and civic factors were critical, including high implementation costs and resistance from neighbours worried about the quality of the community due to blocked views and increased traffic. The community had also intended to locate a new neighbourhood park and elementary school on the identified site. The proposed three-level roadway ringing the site added to the costs and further isolated it from the river and lake (Brown. Dixon and Gillham,

2009: 159). Neighbouring blocks were built on top of parking structures, thus creating a street level at the same height as the roadway's top level (*ibid*).

Challenges were acknowledged by the city and all stakeholders, and were duly addressed through:

- Community engagement,
- Mixed-use development,
- Blocks along the site were elevated to the level of the roadway with structured parking below.



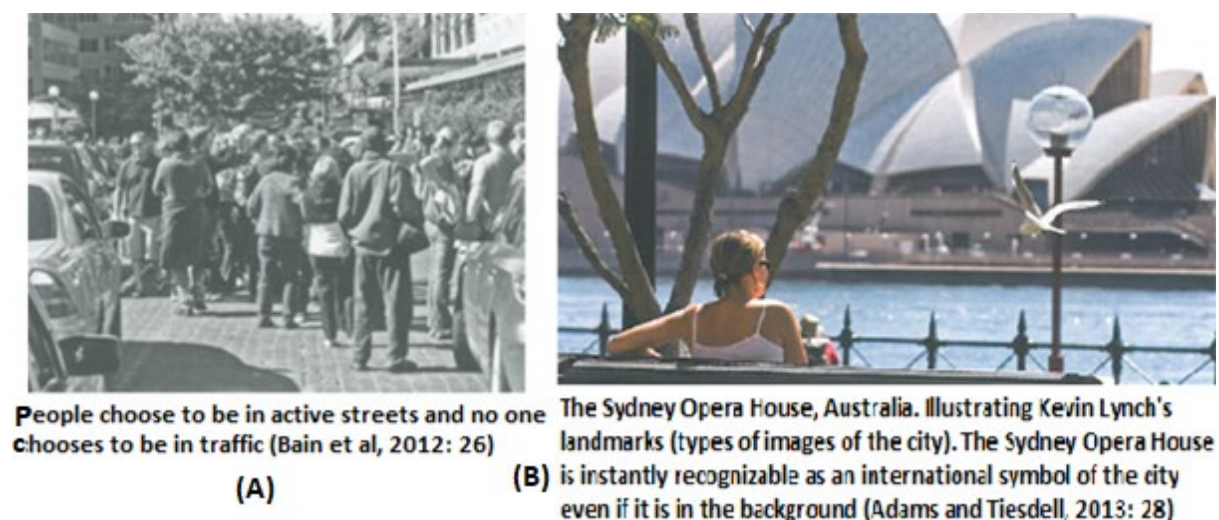
**Fig. 3.2.6: (A) Lakeshore East master Plan, Chicago, Illinois, a lively civic space animated by activities in and around a mixed-use development connected to the lakeside. (B) 3-D animation (Brown, et al, 2009: 159 and 160)**

The new development also stepped down to a six acre park that was to contain an elementary school. By locating the park terra firma rather than using air rights, the planning team not only reduced development costs but ensured that trees and other vegetation would thrive (Brown et al, 2009: 160). Modernist urban planning, which



divided uses into separate zones so as to enhance amenity, efficiency and safety and modernist real estate development both gave rise to mono-functional developments. The advent of mixed-use development was a counter to the urban decay and neglect caused by modernism development principles, creating people- as opposed to vehicle-centred built environments. As Fred Kent noted, if cities are planned for cars and traffic, one gets cars and traffic. If one plans cities for people, one gets people (Bain, Gray, and Rodgers, 2012: 25).

The twentieth century witnessed increased standardisation of place as local development processes were subordinated to national and global pressure for conformity (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 24). This is typified by an identikit of chain stores and restaurants spread along streets, squares in urban centres and rural settings, thus making places indistinguishable. Successful places are distinctive. As argued by Kevin Lynch (1960), five physical elements – paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks – are the key in establishing an individual's image of the city. Each provides an opportunity to create and reinforce the distinctiveness of a place.



**Plate 3.2.4: Illustration of Kevin Lynch's paths and landmarks**

Paths create an opportunity to establish people-centred places (Plate 3.2.4), while landmarks are distinctive because of their singularity that makes them unique or memorable in their context whether viewed from a distance or any angle (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 26). Plate 3.2.4 shows the Sydney Opera House, which is that city's landmark. A community's connection to place is at the heart of resilience – a virtue for

successful places (Kent, 2016: 1). A community's place connectedness and attachment complements resilience to produce a successful place. Sustainable urban design is a collective process whereby all the actors contribute through partnerships and effective participatory processes to integrate environmental, functional, and quality deliberations to manage, plan and design the built environment (Adams and Tiesdell, 2013: 29).

How can buildings reflect things local? Given that this study is set in an African context, how can buildings reflect African value systems? How can identity conceptualisations contribute to Afrocentricity as a phenomenon? What is that seemingly quiet voice in a given context saying about itself in order to recreate a desirable relationship to built form? Taking into consideration these questions and others, the following section examines how identity conceptualisations in the social sciences have impacted on architectural theory and practice, especially with respect to responding to local contextual issues – self reflecting context and vice-versa.

### 3.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF IDENTITY

Built environment professionals in Zimbabwe and many other formerly colonised countries face challenges when it comes to identifying Afrocentric sources from which to draw design inspiration that responds to users' values and ideals. This challenge is exacerbated by exclusive access to public spaces and buildings designed and built in colonial times that still dominate the built form landscape. Open access in the post-independence period has resulted in some of these spaces and buildings being overwhelmed by numbers and having to accommodate lifestyles and values that they were not designed for. The inherent problem with regard to buildings built in colonial times is two-pronged:

- they were built to accommodate Eurocentric lifestyles; and
- they reflect a Eurocentric image and identity.

Both of these are now out-dated. As for post-independence public spaces and buildings, the question is how designers have responded to the values of users in a new political dispensation. What are the generative roots of the new architecture?

What has been the intended imagery and identity? In other words, how can they respond to the phenomena of localness?

Answering these questions that are foundational to the research problem requires an understanding of what constitutes localness. Imagery is a key component of localness as is identity. Capturing an appropriate image and identity requires the designer to have in-depth understanding of the users and their environment. Unwin (2009: 29) argues that identification of a place asserts the indispensable part played in architecture by the user as well as the designer. The nature of the users of public or civic buildings and spaces has changed tremendously since independence in formerly colonised countries. Built environment professionals working in post-colonial countries have the unenviable challenge of dealing with this local response phenomenon due to the debasement of traditional built forms. Given that most of these built environments emerged from colonial rule and that the precolonial heritage was largely destroyed, the question is where and how one can begin to identify locally grounded generators of architecture for contemporary postcolonial built environments. How can the process of identifying these indicators be used as a teaching and learning tool in an architectural curriculum to enable future engagement with issues of localness?

This problem entails understanding the definition of architecture and conceptualisation of Afrocentric image and identity issues as the basis for decolonisation of built environments. The definition will enable one to approach the subject of localness from a well-informed standpoint. Since the problem is about identification of locally derived resources as a generator of architecture, a clear conceptualisation of Afrocentricity is also critical in order to reflect an Afro-responsive image and identity. Given that it is assumed that localness is connected to the traditionality of the context it is important that that term is clearly conceptualised. Architecture is an activity whose fundamental idea is enabling identification of a place. The notion that identification of place lies in the generative core of architecture can be explored and illustrated further. In doing so one can think of architecture not as a language, but as like one in some ways. It can be said that place is to architecture as meaning is to language. Meaning is the essential burden of language; thus, place is the essential burden of architecture (Unwin, 2009: 28).

From Unwin's assertions, one can deduce that a place has an identity that it communicates to observers and users, which renders identity an important variable in the quest for locally derived design generators. How can identity be conceptualised and how is it linked to the concepts of Afrocentricity and ultimately, architecture?

Afrocentricity is a design product that is 'home-grown' and not steeped in some foreign ideology to the extent of alienating consumers. It is thus a sound grounding for decolonisation of built environments. In this case, foreign means something that is unfamiliar to Africans. This point is pertinent when considering how some sections of South African society have recently reacted to statues erected before the dawn of freedom. This study addresses the challenge of how design should respond to contextual issues and how to define these in any given situation as part of decolonisation processes using a couple of key civic spaces in Bulawayo as case studies. These public facilities command respect in terms of scale and function and therefore have a publicly visible meaning.

As noted earlier, image and identity are important contributors to Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity is a broad concept that is used in this study to signify contextual variables that can be used as a resource in designing the built form and thus promote decolonisation of African built environments. This concept is further explored as the thesis develops.

Clear conceptualisation of Afrocentricity entails an understanding of how architecture is defined. The following sub-section discusses various approaches to the definition of identity and how it feeds into architecture.

### **3.3.1 Conceptualisation of social identity**

Before examining the meaning of architecture, it is important to outline the conceptualisation of identity. Some theorists believe that identity is a dead concept that should not matter in the social sciences as it has been overused to the extent of becoming meaningless (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 1-47). Brubaker and Cooper's assertions are supported by Sinisa Malešević (2002, 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2011) who argues that, as an analytical concept, identity – by which he generally means

ethnic identity – is confused and confusing, means too many things and encompasses too many different processes to be of any social analytical value. He suggests that it has become reified in social science as a phenomenon whose existence and importance can be taken for granted (Jenkins, 2008: 14). Malešević adds that identity is an ideological notion – basically false knowledge – of recent historical origin which power elites manipulate to their own advantage and is not a generic or universal aspect of the human repertoire (ibid).

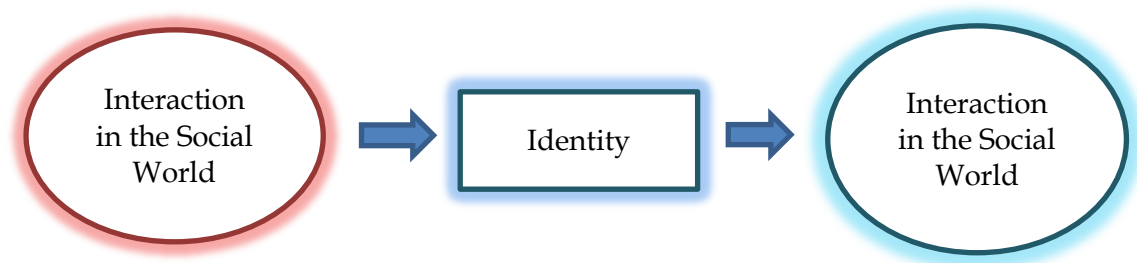
While this school of thought makes some valid points, the term identity is also used for analytical purposes in other fields such as marketing, law, politics, planning, architecture and a host of other public discourses outside sociology. Therefore, discarding the notion of identity for social analytical purposes is not a solution (Ashton, Deaux, McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004: 82). If there is a discussion in the world outside academia, excluding some key words such as identity is not a sound communication policy (Jenkins, 2008: 14). Moreover, it would still be necessary to formulate abstract, shorthand terms that enable thinking about, knowing who is who and the fact that people are, in their own and the eyes of others, identified as this, that or the other. While replacing identity with identification is a somewhat attractive alternative, in that it refers explicitly to process, this is not much of an improvement, because it is stylistically cumbersome (Jenkins, 2008: 14). Identification is the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellow human beings, individually and collectively (Jenkins, 2008: 13).

Jenkins proposes that a balance should be struck between complete rejection of identity in the style of Brubaker and Malešević, and uncritical acceptance of its ontological status and axiomatic significance (Jenkins, 2008: 14). This calls for more care in interpretation, and more modesty in how it is argued. Since both identity and identification are nouns, and therefore potentially vulnerable to reification, what matters most is how to write and talk about them, rather than an artificial and exclusive choice between them. This study proposes the use of both terms and links them to the definition of placemaking and ultimately to architecture.

Some theorists define identity as a product of interaction in the social world that in turn guides interaction in the social world (Simon, 2004: 2). Thus, sense of identity is a

product of social interaction (Adler and Procter, II, 2007). This conceptualisation of identity is considered useful in this study as architecture is regarded as a social product – a joint effort of users and designers. Furthermore, interaction in the social world is a question of attitude, one that the researcher believes the built form should attempt to accommodate.

Understanding this cause-effect relationship is the key to guard against reification and find a useful conceptualisation of identity. This implies the need to examine how identification works or is done, as well as reflexivity and the social construction of identity in interaction and at institutional level (Jenkins, 2008: 17). When it comes to individualisation, identity in the broad sense was conceived as mere ‘imposition’ from outside, or by society. According to this account, identity is not an outcome of external linguistic or symbolic systems, but an open-ended and reflexive process of self-formation (Anthony and du Gay, 2009: xiv). This definition might be at odds with what the researcher aims to achieve as linguistic and external symbolic systems that may be in the form of the built form are a reflection of the identity of users. This issue is further investigated when defining architecture. Nonetheless, it is useful in understanding some elements of identification.



**Fig. 3.3.1. Identity as a social psychological mediator between input from and output in the social world (Adapted from: Simon, 2004: 2)**

Reification can be avoided by considering identity to be both an independent and dependent variable (Fig 3.3.1) and consideration that identity could eventually turn out to be an analytic fiction (Simon, 2004: 2 - 3). This being the case, identity is useful in built form especially if one can identify both similarities and differences and use them as design generators. A definition that spreads over time and space is probably the most appropriate. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) use identity to designate sameness across persons or over time to capture allegedly core, foundational aspects that exist and to highlight the processual, interactive development of solidarity and collectivity.

### 3.3.2 Architecture as a variant of identity

Kevin Lynch (1960: 8) postulates that an environmental image consists of three components: identity, structure and meaning. A workable image first requires the identification of an object, which implies its distinction from other things and its recognition as a separable entity – identity. Secondly, the image must include the object's spatial relationship with the observer and to other objects. Finally, the object must have some meaning for the observer, whether practical or emotional (*ibid*). This meaning could be extended to the realm of spirituality, varying from one culture to another. This way of viewing built form has significant bearing on architecture.

The definition of architecture is important as it informs its conception. Over time, architecture has been variously construed as:

- An art for all to learn because all are concerned with it – John Ruskin;
- A masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light - Le Corbusier;

(Ching, 1995: 8)

Some theorists argue that architecture is a socio-cultural phenomenon (*ibid*). The challenge is to find an appropriate interpretation that will support this study's thought processes on the definition of local identity. Unwin (2009: 28) delineates architecture as conceptual organisation, its intellectual structure. Underlying this meaning is that architecture as an activity and involves the act of organising places around human needs. Hence, he expresses it variously as:

- A point where the mind touches the world
- Configured architectural elements that seem to accommodate or offer the possibility of accommodation to, a person, an activity, a mood, a spirit, a god, etc.
- A medium between life and the wider world – its surroundings
- A product of organising activities to make sense of the world human beings inhabit.

(Unwin, 2009: 32 - 33)

The act of organising the world around an individual so that it becomes familiar to them implies taking into account the familiarity that normally emanates from the ingrained character of a place – *genius loci* (Unwin, 2009: 32). Places are the sum total of what is naturally engrained, be it a natural or artificial environment. Given the costs of

creating an artificial environment, especially those associated with energy consumption, buildings should exist in a natural one; hence, the need to respond to local issues in as constructive a way as possible.

Besides social identity, architecture is often linked to cultural identity (Rapoport, 1969; Leach in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 297 – 311). What sense would discourse such as critical regionalism or gender and space make unless they assumed some connection between identity and the built environment? (Leach in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 297). These discourses further suggest the linkage between identity in general and built form; group identity practices are about manufacturing cultural and historical belongings which mark out terrains of commonality that delineate the politics and social dynamics of “fitting-in” (Leach in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 302).

Leach (ibid) adds that belonging to a place can therefore be understood as an aspect of territorialism, and out of that belonging a sense of identity might be forged. This identification process manifests at personal as well as communal level. It mirrors the case of an individual identifying with their home and the community identifying with civic spaces – an equivalent of a centre and its externalisation.

The evolution of the concept of identity has been reflected by the built environment in various parts of the world. One example is Bennelong’s small house and the Opera House in Sydney, Australia. The discourse on these buildings is premised on sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s remark that, “like all languages, the language of things is as useful for lying as it is for telling the truth” (Lefebvre, 1991: 81). In essence, the appearance of a thing, its material and shape languages, might conceal the conditions and processes that brought it into being. These two buildings reflect ideas about identity and both occupy the most prominent site in Sydney Harbour – Bennelong Point, a thin arm of land forming the southern side of the cove Sydney centres on (Hely, 2013: 19).





**Fig. 3.3.2: West View of the Cove taken from the Rocks at the rear of the General Hospital - 1789 (Hely, 2013: 19)**



**Plate 3.3.1: The Sydney Opera House on the Cove (Google, accessed, 17/11/2017)**

The point that is home to the Sydney Opera House carries the name of the indigenous Aboriginal man whose house occupied the spot for a short while, from 1790 – 1795. The two buildings, Bennelong's small house (Fig. 3.3.2) and the Opera House (Plate 3.3.1) could not be further apart in terms of scale or technology but both have acted to amplify the criticality of their location, a location already resonant through association with the founding of Australia as a British colony. At various times since 1790, both have been used to construct ideas about indigenous and non-indigenous identity.



**Fig. 3.3.3: Sydney Harbour in context (Google, accessed 17/11/2017)**



**Plate 3.3.2: Virtual Sydney Harbour: Its virtual natural state (Google, accessed 17/11/2017)**



**Plate 3.3.3: Virtual Sydney Harbour (Google, accessed 17/11/2017)**

Fig. 3.3.2 shows the foreground with marines/officers' housing, the Governor's house set in the landscaped grounds and Bennelong's house with a chimney on the point jutting out of the far side of the harbour. As in many countries with a history of colonisation, relationships between the original inhabitants of Australia and the broad colonial enterprise have been uneasy. There are multiple concerns at stake but ideas about identity run through much that has been negotiated and debated since the British stepped ashore in 1788 at what was to become Bennelong Point (Hely, 2013: 20).

Two key events in the 1990s underline this. Firstly, the Mabo Decision (1992) in which the High Court of Australia overturned the previously held concept of *terra nullius* – that the land was empty at the point of British settlement – was the catalyst for much discussion about relationships between indigenous land custodianship and identity.

The second event was the Australian Human Rights Commission's (1997) far-reaching investigation of the practice of removing Aboriginal and mixed-race children from their parents and bringing them up outside their culture, a practice carried out on a nationwide scale from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The report, *Bring them back home: The "Stolen Children" Report* (Australian Human Rights Commission 1997), documented, among other things, the repercussions of this practice for children's parents' and families' identities (Hely, 2013: 20).

These were both monumental enquiries with far-reaching ramifications; they resonate and continue to be debated today. The lessons they teach is that the constant iterations of the past produced by historical processes engender particular constructions of identity. This contextualises the various ways in which Bennelong's small brick house has been conceived through the historical record, and the changing ways in which the Sydney Opera House has written it into its own complex story. One is drawn to question whether built structures have the power to speak about themselves. This could be answered by revisiting eyewitness accounts of the building of the structures or built form and then examining the ways in which the foundational stories are retold to meet particular needs and produce particular identities.

Architectural space – a house, a temple, or a city – is a microcosm possessing lucidity that natural features lack (Tuan, 1991: 100). This implies that planned and built spaces create a particular awareness. It is true that even without architectural form people are able to sense the difference between interior and exterior, closed and open, darkness and light, and private and public. This kind of knowing is inchoate. Architectural space – even a simple hut surrounded by cleared ground – can define such sensations and render them vivid. Moreover, the built environment clarifies social roles and relations. People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed rather than nature's raw stage ..... architecture is key to comprehending reality (Tuan, 1991: 102).

In an equal degree of measure and importance, built environments 'clarify social roles and relations' as much as the symbolic acts buildings are attended by – especially significant ones – and the processes by which an understanding of a building's history is knitted into the fabric of public life by individuals and institutions (Hely, 2013: 21).

Narratives play a significant role, especially when managed and manipulated to construct a particular identity. Australia has been in British hands since 1788, when it was incrementally taken possession of, arguably disenfranchising – on the whole – the indigenous Aboriginal population. Relations between the two broad cultural groups have been under negotiation since then, modulated by guilt, and with anger, sadness and humiliation – and sometimes good cheer – on both sides; a sometimes harmonious, sometimes exasperated, sometimes disinterested state of ease and unease (ibid).

The account of the small brick house that Bennelong requested be built for him is one of the nation's founding stories. Bennelong was a young man when the British landed at Sydney Cove, a Wangal man from one of the clans who make up the population of the Sydney (Warrane) area, collectively known as 'eora', normally taken to mean 'of the place' (Hely, 2013: 22).

After the British, led by Governor Arthur Phillip, landed in what is now the city of Sydney, an initial period of interaction and exchange was recorded between the cultures, sometimes friendly but increasingly not, and before long the indigenous

occupants retreated to more distant parts of the harbour. The new arrivals cleared the natural vegetation and replaced it with the Georgian style Governor's House and built fences and gardens. After having failed to build a close relationship with the indigenous population, Governor Phillip held an Aboriginal man captive who later passed away due to smallpox (ibid). Two more Aborigines were kidnapped, one of whom was Bennelong. The motive was to gain local knowledge. Bennelong was sociable and entertaining such that he began to build a bond with the Governor as he was allowed to visit the Governor's House. However, he later escaped, clearly showing that he was held against his will.

In September 1790, while visiting Manly Cove, close to the original kidnapping site and attempting to make contact with Bennelong amongst a large group of his compatriots, Phillip survived a spear attack. This has been interpreted as a ritual for past wrongdoing committed by the British (ibid). At a later stage, Bennelong and his compatriots were invited, this time as visitors. It was at this point that Bennelong asked Governor Phillip to build him a house and he obliged. Bennelong's request was granted simply because he had shown willingness to build relations with the settlers, was friendly and approachable and had also learnt the language. Once the house was built Bennelong and his fellow countrymen and women used it primarily as a gathering place until he accompanied the Governor and two other Aborigines to England in 1792. While he was away the building was hardly used and it became derelict and had been demolished by the time he returned in 1795.

There has been a discourse around whether the Bennelong house was a gift or exchange. Phillip wanted to learn about the local environment and might have readily accepted building Bennelong a hut in return. Clearly, something was wanted in return. It is not recorded whether Bennelong asked for the land – his request was just for a house – he surely presumed the land was his and not Phillip's to give (Hely, 2013: 25). The history of land tenure in Australia began with one basic assumption: all land was the property of the Crown. The Aborigines might have supposed they had some claim upon it, but at the time, they probably no more thought of a right to the earth they trod than the air they breathed (Barnard, 1962: 268 in Hely, 2013: 25).

Today, the house has disappeared and much of the long rocky promontory where it sat has gone as well, replaced by a number of buildings. The current occupant, the Sydney Opera House, completed the process (Plate 3.3.4) (ibid). The building's substitution of itself for the Point is total – no traces remain of what might now be called the 'site' of Bennelong's house (ibid). Likewise, the name Bennelong Point may be slipping into history..... for good... in the context of modern technology with its electronic gadgets. Despite this, in the years since it was commissioned, the links between the building and an Aboriginal past have often been invoked to secure and cement a connection between the Opera House and national identity (ibid).



**Plate 3.3.4: A view into Sydney Harbour and Bennelong Point (Google, accessed 17/11/2017)**

The souvenir produced for the opening of the Opera House on 20 October 1973 noted that Bennelong Point was the site of the first building constructed for the Aborigines by Europeans in Australia. This gives no hint of its complex history and portrays an innocent encounter with Bennelong rather than the fact that he was kidnapped. It is meant to cultivate and sustain relationships without any reference to pressure or exchange (Hely, 2013: 26).

The narrative is that Bennelong Point is historically a place of performances. This is drawn from the gatherings held by Bennelong and his compatriots at Bennelong House. The extrapolation of this narrative, which aims to bolster national identity, argues that the Sydney Opera House seamlessly continues the tradition. The picture that arises is that Australia was ordered by Europeans and one of those ordering principles is Bennelong House. This narrative has evolved over the centuries from Bennelong attempting to spear Phillip and later approaching the Governor with numerous requests including a house to be built on the end of Bennelong Point (ibid).

The first known concert on Bennelong Point was in March 1791 when Bennelong provided an evening of entertainment at the house for the Governor and his party (ibid). In essence the object acts as a vehicle for bringing past time into present, so that the histories of ancestors, titles, or mythological events become an intimate part of a person's identity (Weiner, 1985: 210).

Notwithstanding this argument, there is no 'person' here whose identity is being constructed; rather it is the Sydney Opera House in whose name the house's alienable status is defined historically. The Opera House is a monumental building and just as Phillip saw Bennelong's house as a step in the direction of civilising the Aborigines, so the Opera House presents to the world the extent to which Australia has taken on the mantle of European culture. Symbolised within it is the power of the will to shape place, and the massive reworking of Bennelong Point could be seen as being analogous to the way the whole country has been reshaped and re-inscribed (Hely, 2013: 27).

One of the factors that influence the design of any building is personal predilection, both of the designer and the sponsoring clients. These preferences may be coloured by group affiliations, although it is important to reiterate that design decisions are often made by individuals whose own sense of identity is projected onto that of the nation they seek to build (Vale, 1992: 52). Therefore, just as the British brought their customs and culture with them to this place, so the Opera House's architect brought his (Hely, 2013: 27).

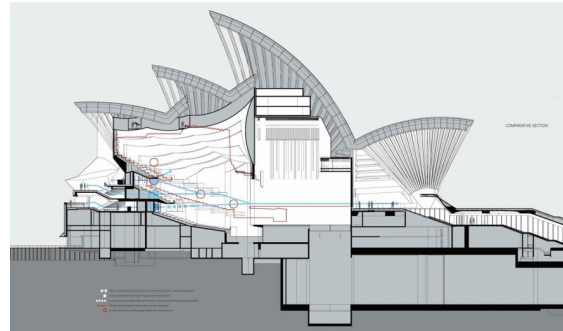
The podium owes much to Mayan and Asian temple architecture (Fig. 3.3.4) that inspired Utzon to conceptualise an elevated platform as a place where the concert



goer is separated from the ordinariness of everyday life (ibid). The setting was deliberate to propel the user into a dreamland of the pure joys of theatre, concert and opera (Plate 3.3.5).



**Plate 3.3.5: A view into the Sydney Harbour and the Harbour Bridge from within the Sydney Opera House (Google, accessed 19/11/2017)**



**Fig. 3.3.4: The Sydney Opera House was built on a podium reminiscent of Mayan and Asian architecture (Google, accessed 19/11/2017)**

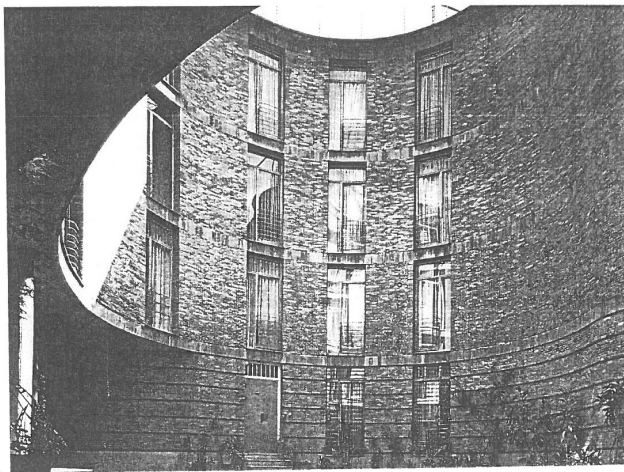
Walking through the Opera House, as one moves around the outside walks, climbs the podium and travels through the interior, one is struck by the way vistas open up, views are framed, and the drama of the harbour is offered up (Hely, 2013: 27) (Plate 3.2.5). With respect to space making elements, Bennelong House and the Sydney Opera House provide a dramatic civic space that goes beyond Bennelong Point through its symbolism and both find solace in the Australian memory and psyche.

The narrative of the two 'houses' is philosophically set in the same perspective with respect to indigenous and European settlers. From a European colonial perspective, Bennelong House might have marked the place where Bennelong and his compatriots were rescued from a remote, uncivilised past. The Sydney Opera House might model a more cultured Australia, distanced from its uncivilised (convict) past (Hely, 2013: 28). The Sydney Opera House can also be viewed symbolically with respect to the initial contacts of Europeans and the Aborigines. The site symbolically representing the indigene of Bennelong and his fellow tribesman and the sails of the Opera House being a symbolically representing European arrivals by sea and air.

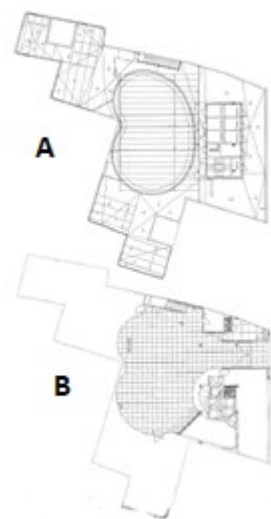
Identity conceptualisation and how buildings perform from this perspective can be understood through critical regionalism which has been championed by theorists such

as Kenneth Frampton (1985), and Tzonis and Lefaivre (1985, 1992). Tzonis and Lefaivre developed a critical viewpoint which is cognitively and aesthetically based on the concept of 'defamiliarisation' derived from literary critic Victor Schklovsky's work in 1920 (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 18).

Where necessary, the sentimentality effect can be removed by means of unfamiliar forms, like the replacement of a regionalist rectilinear form by a heart-shaped one in the Cruz and Ortiz project of a Manzana patio in the housing project in Seville, Spain (1974 – 76) (Plate 3.3.6) (Mthethwa, 2011: 119). In introducing an architectural component traditionally associated with the community, the architects' intention is to remind users of its meaning and warn of the potential loss of that original sense of community, which might occur in the process of technological advancement and bureaucratic rationalisation of the city (Lefaivre and Tzonis, 1992: 18). In this instance, the critical regionalism approach employs a strategy that outwardly achieves an aesthetic form, but ultimately leaves the spatial composition unchanged (Plate 3.3.6).



**Plate 3.3.6 - View of the kidney-shaped internal courtyard of a housing project in Seville, Spain (Tzonis, and Lefaivre, 1992: 82)**



**Fig. 3.3.5: The ground (A) and roof (B) floor plan showing the kidney-shaped patio (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 81)**

This project was a call for placeness and community – a search for identity.

Given the constraints of tight site, the architects chose to concentrate all the free space into one collective patio, a reference to the traditional Sevillian house, but they were required to accommodate it to the irregular site by making it kidney –shaped (Tzonis and Lefavre, 1992: 82). The building thus kept the traditional Sevillian patio (Fig. 3.3.5) that preserved the social and communal values – a lesson for Afrocentricity.



Another feature of critical regionalism is that it derives the identity of a place by employing local myth and iconology. This approach is used in a number of countries. A good example is the Tampere Main Library by Raili and Reima Pietila (1978 – 86) which employed the primordial icon of a bird-like form, marrying it with contemporary technology and public life (Fig. 3.3.6 and Plate 3.3.7).

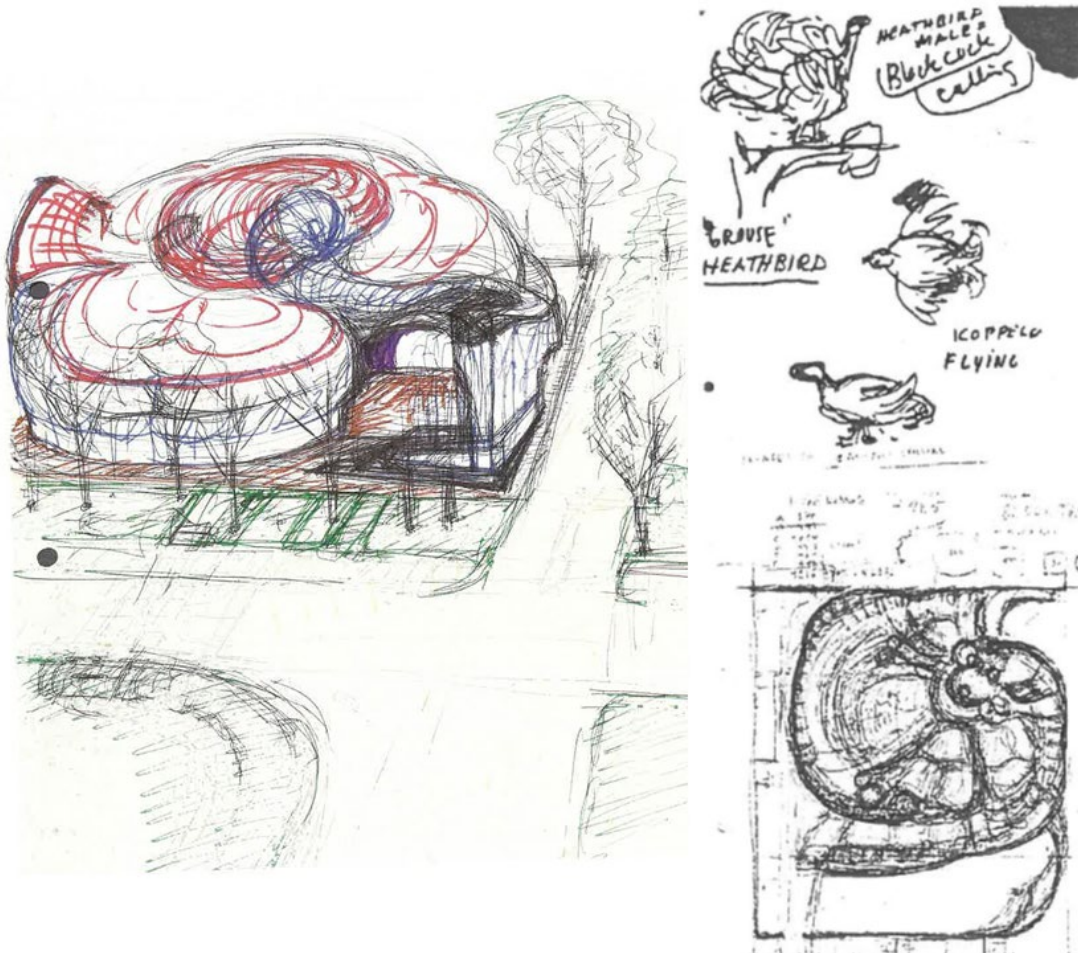


Fig. 3.3.6 - Conceptual drawings, including a volumetric sketch (Source- Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 154)

Symbolism was employed in this building as a means of recalling the Finish *genius loci* of virgin nature of the deep primeval forests that is home to the Metso - a large wood-grouse or blackcock (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 152). In this design the Metso captures the Metso making a mating call or cooing to symbolise production of knowledge. The Metso symbolism results in a sculptural 3-D building design (Fig 3.3.6). Afrocentrism can also draw lessons from the sculptural qualities inspired by traditional belief systems and language in the design of civic spaces.



**Plate 3.3.7 - View into the entrance of the Tampere Main Library (Tzonis and Lefaivre, 1992: 153)**

Regionalism in the above examples is inspired by local symbolism and myths and in some instances bordering on sculptural resolutions that capture the genius loci. –

The Bennelong point and the primordial qualities of deep Finish forests. These examples exude symbolism and sculptural qualities that would benefit Afrocentrism in grounding built forms.

Consequently, Identity is a complex subject in most societies but the Bennelong brick house has projected its fair share on contemporary Australian society with respect to its impact on built form identity especially with regard to the Sydney Opera House. Critical regionalism also enables one to design buildings that reflect local history, imagery, symbolism and iconography such as the Tampere Main Library by Raili and Reima Pietila Architects (1978 – 86). There are wide possibilities for identity to be to be employed as an architectural design generator positively enabled by fields such as sculpture and symbolism.

### **3.3.3 Identity drawn from the image of the city**

The world as seen by human beings is a series of images whose understanding is constructed by perceptions. A person's perception of space is centred on him/herself. Cliff Moughtin (2003: 89) adds that the development of schemata for the general organisation of space is based on this subjective idea of the centre as a point of reference in the environment. Visual perceptions are the key in how that world is brought into being, whether perceived or real. Images that are visualised are determined by each individual's experiences accumulated over time and space. To study the world means to study the perceptions and ideas created by human beings and the world is mainly the world of perceptions, images or ideas (Demuth, 2013: 12). Environmental images are the result of a two-way process between the observer and his/her environment. The environment suggest distinctions and relations, and the

observer – with great adaptability and in light of his/her own purposes – selects, organises, and endows what is seen. The image so created limits and emphasises what is seen, while the image itself is tested against filtered perceptual input, in a constant interactive process (Lynch, 1960: 6).

Images are a series of symbols that constitute a meaning that is influenced by perceptions. These symbols are represented both graphically and plastically such as the Christian cross, the Jewish star, the Communist hammer and sickle and many other symbols in which meaning is invested (Frank in Kepes, 1966: 11). Identity deals with definition by others as well as self-definition. Definition is influenced by how things are perceived; hence the connection between identity and perceptions.

It is generally agreed by psychologists that meanings have a practical purpose; they inform us about something in our environment (Hesselgren, 1975: 74). Some colours mean different things in different settings. Seeing something green and round might mean an apple; thus one is informed that the object can be eaten. In architectural theory this might be less interesting. Meaning assumes a life of its own when thought of in the context of various elements within the world of perception elements or factors.

A meaning can be connected to perception in one of the following ways:

1. An agreement is made that one meaning or another will be given to a perception – conventional meaning
  2. As a result of previous experience, a meaning is connected to a perception according to the laws of association – associative meanings
  3. A meaning may be attached to a perception according to some natural relation – spontaneous meanings
- (Hesselgren, 1975: 74 - 75).

An example of the conventional meaning is a flag where a nation agrees on the meaning of the colours and symbols represented. Culture is an example of associative meaning where people share common behavioural patterns and worldviews. Finally, a piece of architecture is an example of spontaneous meaning. In this case, some kinds of meaning are spontaneously associated with certain perceptions.

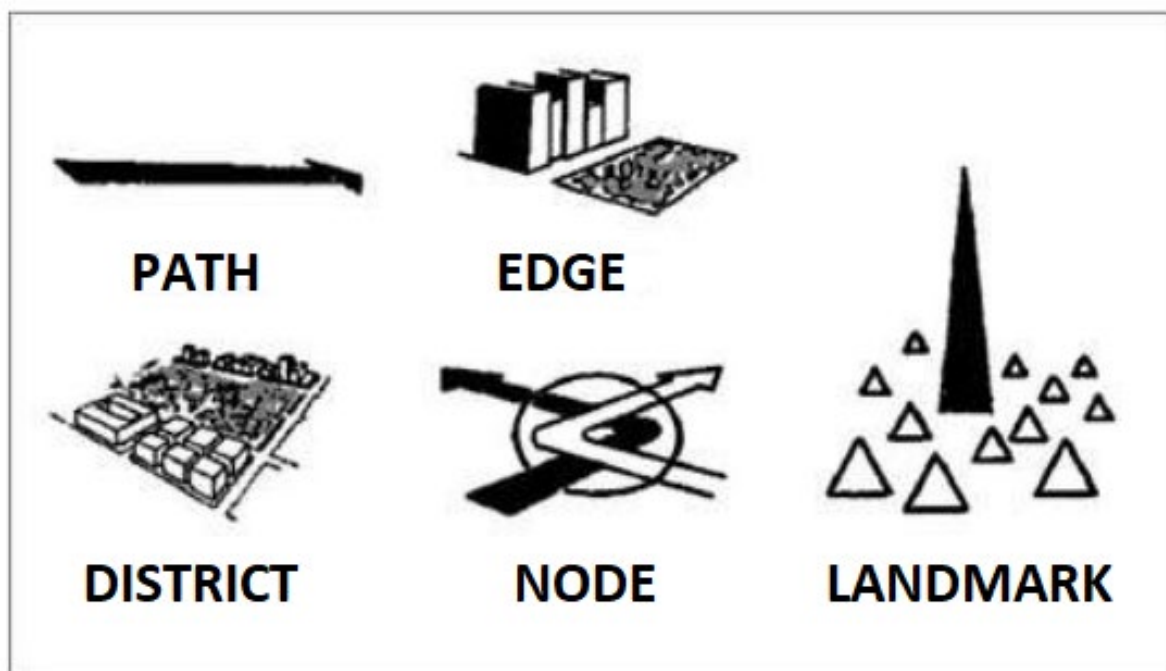


Fig. 3.3.7: Five types of images of the city (Lynch, 1960)

In his study of different cities, Kevin Lynch (1960) concluded that people adjust to their surroundings and extract/structure an identity out of the material at hand. The psychological theory explained by Kevin Lynch (1960: 8) argues that there are five types of city image elements through which people form their mental image of the environment: nodes, paths, edges, districts and landmarks (Fig. 3.3.7). Nodes are points or intensive foci which people enter and leave; paths are channels of movement; edges or boundaries contain or break the continuity of form; districts are areas or domains which have an identity, form or character that is recognizable; and landmarks are points of reference which are independent of the observer and are drawn out for the purpose of identification, orientation or structuring.

The independent variable in this approach is the physical environment which relates to the attributes of identity and structure in the mental image. This leads to the definition of imageability – that quality in the physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer (Lynch, 1960: 9). This quality might also be considered to be legibility or visibility.



### 3.3.4 Synthesis of identity and placemaking

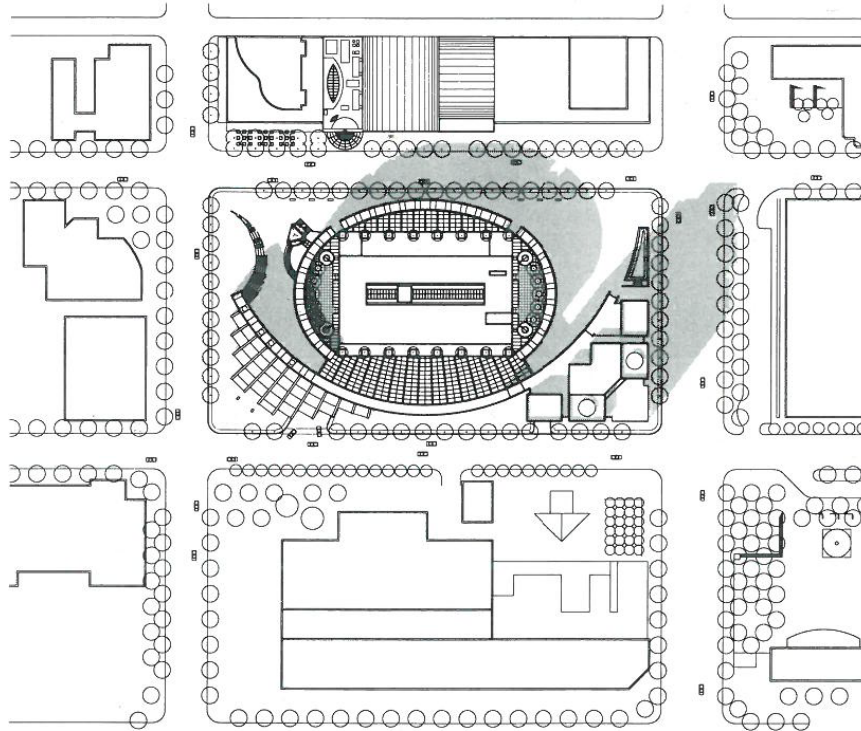
Civic spaces are about interaction – a collective centring. The Vancouver Library Square (Fig. 3.3.8 and Plate 3.3.9) is one such project that encapsulates collectiveness and projects a communal identity born out of public participation. The building's classically-detailed elliptical wall wraps around a central rectangular block to create interactive indoor and outdoor public spaces. A seven-storey swirl of glass and granite shaped like a latter-day coliseum, Moshe Safdie's controversial new library complex brings a distinct touch of ancient Rome to the centre of Vancouver.



A free standing, elliptical, four-tiered, colonnaded wall around a rectangular library block at the heart of the scheme has a large public garden on its roof (Myerson, 1996:189) (Plate 3.3.8). The building is people-friendly due to its ability to draw visitors from the public plaza into its enclosed spaces.

**Plate 3.3.8: View of the Vancouver Library square (Myerson, 1996: 188)**





**Fig. 3.3.8: Site Plan – The outer wall follows the elliptical shape of the development on its rectangular block, and literally embraces the central library building (Myerson, 1996: 189)**



The building was a product of public participation. A ballot was held and it won the most votes and has been very popular with the public ever since it was built.

**Plate 3.3.9: An aerial view of the scheme showing the four-tiered, colonnaded, elliptical wall. A federal government building with similar aesthetics was part of this project, thus creating a truly civic precinct (Myerson, 1996: 189)**

In its built form, the library centre is undeniably community-interactive in the way users are drawn from an inviting external plaza into a cavernous mall-like arcade which curves beneath a glass roof (*ibid*) (Plate 3.3.10).



The roof level public garden is supplemented by a staff cafeteria and lounges that open onto their own private gardens. A second elliptical wall defines the east side of the site, enclosing the arcade (*ibid*). This project embraces the community; hence its popularity as a venue for civic functions in its public areas as well as the facilities inside.

**Plate 3.3.10: Inside the glass-covered mall-like arcade the light pours into reading spaces, creating a unique civic spatial experience (Myerson, 1996: 191)**

Like the Sydney Opera House, this building and its civic outdoor space achieve its identity by tapping into history. The building stakes its place as a public place through connecting with Roman civic spaces and achieves its placemaking credentials by the process in which it was conceived.

Drawing lessons from Norburg-Schulz's *genius loci* and Unwin *et al*'s definition of architecture, identity plays an important role in creating a soul of the built environment. Identification with a place involves being one with it, creating a mirror effect that ensures the subject and place reflection that recreate a projector and screen type of relationship.

The precedent study on Bennelong House and the Sydney Opera House shows how identity in built form could be inspired by place, history, culture and mythology. The study of identity and how it is reflected in the built form is the key with respect to placemaking and architecture. This can be employed as a basis to understand the relationship between consumers and their built environments. Studies of identity and how it influences built form give rise to issues around symbolism drawn from history, mythology, and other local factors.

Visuals of what is seen evoke different emotions among people and these emotions feed on how the world and the universe talk back to the human psyche. The process through which human beings formulate images in an environment is critical in understanding how this eventually leads to symbolism. The importance of identifying placemaking and architectural qualities around identity construction phenomena is thus further investigated through symbolic interaction theory and how symbolism issues manifest themselves in built form.

### 3.4 SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY AND BUILT FORM

As observed in the previous section, identity can be interpreted symbolically in built form where symbolisation is interpreted through historical events, and mythological and other cultural artefacts. This section discusses the meaning of historical and mythological images through symbolism and how they could begin to inform architecture from its inception. Concrete images are used as symbols to represent a general or universal world in shadows. The symbol may be public or private, and local or universal (Sone, 7 March 2016: 7). These varying levels of symbolisation are determined collectively or individually. The individual and collective meaning of



symbols is determined by collective understanding of the worldview. A symbol is like a metaphor that has lost its bond with something close and seeks to bond itself to many other words (Sone, 7 March 2026: 7). It is thus the duty of architects, planners and urban designers to identify the world view of any given collective in order to employ it as generators of design, especially in relation to civic spaces. This would ensure that these spaces are collectively accepted and internalised as localisation of built form.

Images are first constructed to conjure up the appearance of something that is absent. Gradually, it becomes evident that an image could outlast what it initially represented: it then shows how the subject had once been seen by other people (Berger, 1973: 10). An image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance, and preserved – for a few moments or a few centuries. Every image embodies a way of seeing (Berger, 1973: 9 - 10).

The recreation aspect of the meaning of image is a useful one in this endeavour to use symbolism as a design generator for any built form and for civic spaces in this particular instance.

To fully internalise this image-making process into the design process, one has to understand the concept of symbolism. Symbols – in the proper sense of the term – cannot be reduced to mere signs. Signals and symbols belong to two different universes of discourse: a signal is part of the physical world of being, while a symbol is part of the human world of meaning. Signals are operators; symbols are designators (Frank, 1966: 3). A phenomenological consideration of the relationship with architectural objects reveals that architecture is commonly experienced as communication, even while recognising its functionality (Eco, 1980: 12). A roof provides more than shelter; it can symbolise the social status of the owner in the boarder community and also tell the history of how the whole building was conceived. The roof can mimic its broader geographical setting as well as advertise the latest technological developments.

### **3.4.1 The concept of symbolic interaction**

Seeing comes before words. Words are a set of symbols that are used to communicate messages. One sees what one is looking at and looking itself is a matter of choice. It is seeing which establishes one's place in the surrounding world. What is being seen in that world is then explained in words, but words will never undo the fact that the one seeing is surrounded by what is being seen (Berger, 1973: 7).

One can have the knowledge and an explanation of how it feels to be rained on but this can never quite fit the sight. That relationship between what one sees and what one knows will therefore always be dynamic and fluid. Thus, each setting is unique and is determined by the collective worldview. This brings about differences in how images are interpreted by various cultures and societies. In turn, it promotes a dynamic approach to symbolism among architects and other professionals in the built environment through what is called Architectural Sociology. Architectural Sociology is the study of how socio-cultural phenomena influence and are influenced by the designed physical environment. "This specialty area should be distinguished from the related field of Environment Sociology, which primarily focuses on the relationships between humans and their natural environments" (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 123).

To be seen and to see is a two-way activity that influences each part's behavioural patterns. The approach to what is seen and how it interacts with human subjects is beneficial to designers in that it acknowledges the influence of the person who is seeing and what is being seen – symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction theory is useful in understanding how the designed physical environment and the individual are interrelated and these feed off each other for self-expression. If designed environments are a reflection of the communities that produced them, this implies that architecture contains and communicates shared symbols; and how they assign agency to the designed physical environment, which invites a different kind of self-reflection (Ibid).

Symbolic interactionism, also known as symbolic interaction, can be defined as the process of interaction in the formation of meanings for individuals (Blumer, 1969). The

theory was inspired by Dewey (1981), who believed that human beings are best understood in a practical, interactive relationship with their environment.

The three core principles of symbolic interaction theory are meaning, language and thought. These principles lead to conclusions about the creation of a person's self and socialization into a larger community. Meaning implies that humans act toward people and things according to the meanings they ascribe to them. Symbolic interactionism holds that meaning is the central aspect of human behaviour. "Language gives humans a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. Humans identify meaning in speech acts with others. Thought modifies each individual's interpretation of symbols. It is a mental conversation that requires different points of view" (Giffin, 1997).

The concept of self is derived from these three principles. It is the sum total of expectations from one's community with language acting as its cog. From this definition of self, it is apparent that the views of others matter and they play a primary role in how individuals define themselves. "As a major theoretical perspective within sociology, symbolic interaction helps one to understand how the designed physical environment and the self are intertwined, with one potentially influencing and finding expression in the other; how architecture contains and communicates our shared symbols; and how we assign agency to some of our designed physical environment, which invites a different kind of self-reflection" (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 123).

The imposition of meaning on objects, events and behavioural patterns is the basis of symbolic interaction. "Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true" (Griffin, 1997). By extrapolation, it can be deduced that society is constructed through human interpretation. This implies that human beings are thinking beings that do not simply respond directly to events and situations, but give meaning to them (Burbank and Martins, 2009: 27). This implies that human beings are capable of engaging in self-talk, meaning that human behaviour and action are a derivative of engagement with oneself and others.

As one of the primary theoretical perspectives within Sociology, symbolic interaction helps to explain the fundamental connections between architecture and human thought, emotions, and conduct and thus provides three fundamental ways through which architecture can be understood.

1. “The perspective emphasizes that designed physical environments and the self potentially influence and find expression in each other.
2. The theory informs us how these designed physical environments contain and communicate our shared symbols and meanings (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1990; Gieryn, 2000; Mead, 1934).
3. Symbolic interaction theory reveals that this designed physical environment is not merely a backdrop for our behaviour. On the contrary, because some designed physical buildings, places, and objects act as agents to shape our thoughts and actions; they invite self-reflection.”

(Smith and Bugni, 2006: 124)

Visual perceptions play an influential role in how architecture is conceived. Smith and Bugni (2006: 124) contend that visual components can contribute to standard social sciences methodologies that rely on words and numbers, particularly for Architectural Sociology. This section uses illustrations to highlight the relationship between symbolic interaction theory and architecture. The dialogue between built form and self is useful as it implicitly deals with placemaking elements as a reflection of the conceivers of built environments, in this case, the African, which is the focus of this study.

In his paper, “Claiming Self: The role of Afrikology in Social interactions”, Baba A.O. Buntu (2013: 1) contends that political, economic and psychological crises have been intrinsically associated with Africa. One would add built forms or specifically architecture to the list, in the sense that most contemporary built forms are not a reflection of the self as defined by Africans since they are dominated by colonial architecture. Although Buntu is arguing from a theological perspective, this argument is valid for the built environment.

The challenge of repositioning Africa and deconstructing its ontological base represents existential opposition to academia, institutions and scholarship, where preconceived ideas of Africa as “the other” have become dominant. Buntu (2013: 1) contends that there is a pressing need to reclaim a collective sense of self as a premise for authentic change. Such change has to be a reflection of self and this applies to all

facets of life, including architecture. From the conceptualisation of the symbolic theory in the previous sub-section, Buntu's argument is a compelling one to reconsider how an African can be reflected in his/her own built environment through appropriate architectural and urban design. An African is considered here due to the fact that this study is based in an African context and in essence is a search for an identity through built form using placemaking elements in traditional built environments as a launch pad for the design of contemporary civic spaces.

Lessons are drawn from early symbolic interactionists, although they did not explicitly address the "self" versus "architecture" connection. However, they did refer to the importance of non-human objects and places for the self. As noted previously, Unwin (2009) defines identification of place as the beginning of architecture and links human activity to place. Early interactionists such as George Simmel placed the same emphasis on the link between self and place (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 125). This was the starting point for the specialization of Architectural Sociology. Simmel focused on how the city with its intense social interaction, stimuli, and change had profound consequences for the individual (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 125).

Simmel's main focus was the intensity of social interactions and how these could have profound consequences for individuals, forcing urban dwellers to be impersonal, reserved, indifferent, blasé, and calculating as a means of protection from over-stimulation (ibid). Simmel viewed the self and place as mutually dependent. He contended that fractures in one's physical environment may cause a kind of alienation in one's very being, and those who experience isolation, normlessness, self-estrangement, and other forms of alienation will alter their behaviours and performances in response to that environment (Ashley and Orenstein, 1998:321–25).

In developing this argument, interactionists/psychologists such as William James defined "empirical self" as the many ways in which individuals think about themselves, and categorised the empirical self into three:

- the "social self" refers to how we are regarded and recognized by others;
- the "spiritual self" refers to our inner self; and
- the "material self" refers to the tangible objects, people, or places that influence the self.

The subject of self and how it is related to place has been discussed by sociologists and architects alike but all make an attempt to link self to built form and how the two influence each other. McCarthy (1984:105–21) offers four propositions that would logically extend symbolic interaction to architecture:

1. “physical objects play a central role in constituting and maintaining the self;
2. physical objects provide the self with a stable and familiar environment;
3. the acts of touching and grasping physical objects play a central role in human beings’ reality construction and maintenance; and
4. the self’s relationship with the physical world is a social relationship”.

As discussed earlier, Herbert Blumer (1969) defines symbolic interaction by focusing on the meanings that are assigned to objects and that influence the self. He observes that there are three types of objects:

1. “social objects” such as professors, students, and parents;
2. “abstract objects” such as integrity, compassion, and loyalty;
3. “physical objects” such as buildings, open spaces, desks, and hallways”.

(Smith and Bugni, 2006: 126)

The work of interactionists continues but without much zeal. This is an important field of study and a fertile knowledge resource for scholars who seek the revival of African traditional architecture as a contemporary architectural design ethos. Melinda Milligan (1998) is one of the interactionists who states that place attachment is based on nostalgic memories of past experiences in a physical setting and anticipation that such positive encounters might continue in the future. The essential point is that classical and, to a lesser extent, contemporary symbolic interaction scholarship reveals that the search for constructing, knowing, and performing the self often occurs in relation to designed physical environments (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 126). Therein lies the importance of the study of symbolic interaction with respect to architecture or built form, in general.

Architects are as passionate as interactionists when it comes to the subject of symbolic interaction. This study investigates such interaction with a specific emphasis on

African settings. Architects are generally interested in how to reveal and express the self through designed environments and much of their thinking on the topic parallels that of symbolic interactionists.

Chris Abel (2000: 141) argues that the “architecture of identity now rivals the architecture of place as one of the principal metaphors and themes in architectural discourse”. This is the case in this study, where the two fields interface, producing a symbiosis between symbolic interaction theory and architectural identity. Some scholars in the architectural theory field such as Christopher Day (1990) believe that “architecture should be places of the soul where physical shapes, forms, spaces, and appearances provide a picture of reality that nourishes human emotions and the self” (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 126). In a now-classic description of the timeless way of building, Christopher Alexander (1979) maintained that buildings and communities only come alive as expressions of self.

This study benefitted immensely from symbolic architecture and its pertinent and powerful reverberation of the self, especially when it comes to civic spaces. Late nineteenth century urban architect Frederick Law Olmsted guided thinking on the design of neighbourhoods and major parks in New York (i.e., Central Park), Chicago, Montreal, Buffalo, Detroit, Cincinnati, and many other cities. He sought to plan cities and design public places and neighbourhoods where the user could come to know and express an urban identity (Olmsted and Sutton, 1979).

Given that this study involved case studies on designed civic spaces, this approach to built form was highly beneficial. Some scholars argue that individuals’ identities are loudly demonstrated in their designed residential places. People choose particular kinds of houses, furniture, decorations, colours, and fabrics to express self. Even the landscaping is a reflection of self when it comes to residential houses’ design. While this study focuses solely on public spaces, the point is taken that there is a need to express the self in built form in a much deeper way. The question is thus how this aspect of symbolic interaction theory can act as an architectural tool of reflection and expression of self and thus act as a purveyor of Afrocentric built forms.

### **3.4.2 Architecture reflects and expresses self**

There are various ways in which architecture reflects and expresses self. This borders on architectural identity, as it is an endeavour to define self and at the same time be defined by others – a fluid definition of identity. In this particular case the “others” is architecture. Architecture defines and reflects its creators as much as its creator(s) reflect and create their architecture. This section focuses on the World Trade Centre Museum and Memorial to illustrate this point.

The 9/11 World Trade Centre Memorial marks a poignant time in the history of America and the world and celebrates the lives of those who passed on in the tragedy – their absence. It is a sombre reminder of the cowardly act committed by individuals who did not value life. In essence, the monument is a reminder of the American people and their will to conquer terrorism. It touches on the psyche of the nation and the world at the time of the event. It therefore reflects the time, the affected nation and the world at large and the dedication of men and women in the struggle against terrorism.

As observed earlier, architects who consider symbolic interactionism to be important in designing built environments seek to design buildings and places that reflect and allow for expression of the self. The Trade Centre Memorial does just that through the use of symbolic interaction theory. It includes many of the tropes of contemporary commemorative art such as geometric forms, water and the names of the deceased and at the time of writing, there were plans to include gardens, park plazas, reflecting pools, and a stone container of unidentified victims’ remains. It is designed to reflect a collective sense of loss and absence, to honour those who lost their lives, and to provide a sense of hope and rebirth. The architects seek, among other goals, to define the World Trade Centre site as a place where Americans can identify, and allow for self-expression and the emotions experienced following the terrorist attacks of 9-11-01 (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 127).

The most poignant symbolism is that of grief represented by water and the sound that it produces close to where the names of the dead are inscripted. The sound pushes one to the quiet end of the tranquil vegetation, offering a sense of reflection on the violent nature of the commemorated event. Gibson (15 September 2011) noted that



“the memorial is located in the western half of the 16-acre site of the Twin Towers and surrounding plazas that were destroyed in the attacks and consists of a grove of trees dotted with stone walkways and benches.



**Plate 3.4.1: Michael Arad's World Trade Centre Memorial, 'Reflecting Absence' (Gibson, 15 Sep, 2011)**

Within this grassy space sits two recessed square pools, of the exact dimensions and on the precise spots of the two towers, each with 30-foot waterfalls lining the insides. Water from the falls washes across the stone floor of the pools to a large central opening where it drains out. Bronze parapets surround the pools with the names of the nearly 3,000 victims of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and Feb. 26, 1993.”



**Plate 3.4.2: (Left) Winning Design for the World Trade Centre Memorial: Reflecting Absence, by Michael Arad and Peter Walker (Gibson, 15 Sep, 2011)**



**Plate 3.4.3 (Above) Interior Design for the World Trade Centre Memorial Competition by Norman Lee and Michael Lewis: Votives in Suspension (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 128)**

Water symbolises purity and is a calming element. In this particular case, it also symbolises the tears of those who have passed through those that stayed behind. All

the tears flow down in unison into square holes. The memorial rises from the bedrock where the foundations of the World Trade Centre once stood to show the unshakable spirit of the American people and their unity in the face of adversity.

Plates 3.4.1 and 3.4.2 depict the symbolic interaction theory with respect to those that passed on. As is fitting, the memorial's symbolic essence captures the collective self of the nation in remembrance of the tragic loss of life. A memorial should distil the essence of the event in compelling symbolic form; precipitate an undiluted confrontation with whatever circle of hell it was created to address; encourage reflection on the event and its meaning; and allow one to depart on a note of spiritual upliftment (Gibson, 15 Sep, 2011).

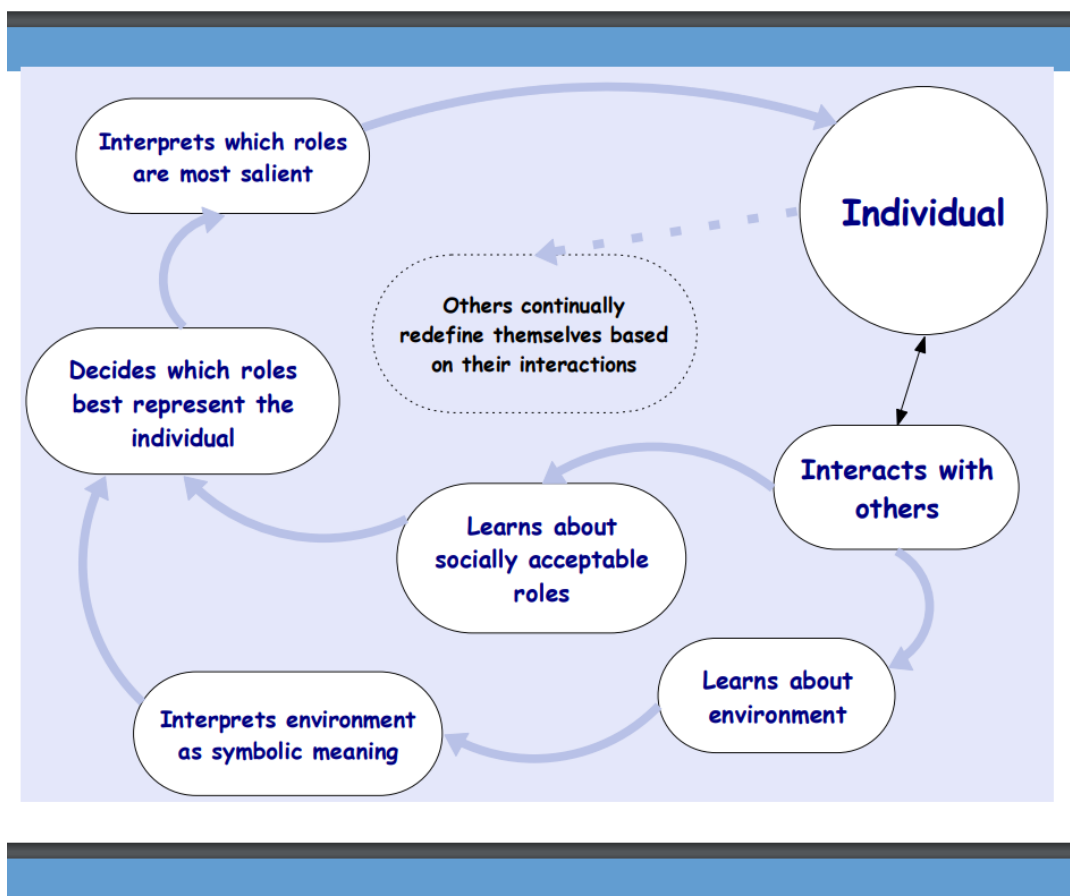
Architects seek to design buildings and places that reflect and enable expression of the self. Michael Arad and Peter Walker's winning design for the World Trade Centre memorial entitled "Reflecting Absence" (Plate 3.4.1) and the designs of other memorial finalists such as Norman Lee and Michael Lewis, whose interior design was entitled "Votives in Suspension", reflect dramatic illustrations (Plate 3.4.3) (Gibson, 2011). Architecture has the capacity to connect to the self, and our interpretation of places and things often reflect who we are or what we would like to project about ourselves to others. This extends to the built environment, meaning that self-reflection and expression extend to urban design. It introduces the element of creating designed environments that are symbolic in nature.

### **3.4.3 Architecture as a symbolic environment**

Referring to built forms, Lawrence and Low (1990: 466) state: "As symbolic, sites condense powerful meaning and values; they comprise key elements in a system of communication used to articulate social relations." This reflects the symbiotic relationship between self and others (built environment). Human beings build to accommodate needs, and provide shelter and general lifestyles. Built structures are reflective of the society/cultures that build them.

Symbolic interactionists maintain that human beings exist in a symbolic environment of social objects and shared language, and emphasise that architecture does not have

“intrinsic meaning”; instead, people give it meaning (Blumer, 1969:68). Such thinking would cause other scholars to assume that designed forms have a direct cause-effect relationship with behaviour; they would cite examples such as the successful standardisation of the prototypical structures of BP, KFC, McDonald’s etc. Most symbolic interactionists would take a very dim view of such “architectural determinism”. Instead, they regard architecture as suggesting possibilities, channelling communication, and providing impressions of acceptable activities, networks, norms and values (Ankerl, 1981:36). Interactionists would more likely see the impact of designed forms as potentially influencing, but not determining, thought and action (Duffy and Hutton, 1998:8–21; Heismath, 1977; Steele, 1981). Humans react to what symbolic interactionists term “defined situation” (Fig. 3.4.1).



**Fig. 3.4.1: Symbolic Interaction Processes (See Burbank and Martins, 2009: 29)**

As noted earlier in this sub-section, interaction occurs through symbols. Fig 3.4.1 depicts the symbolic interaction processes beginning with interaction with self and

others. One starts with a reference group in which one is part of social networks and interactions. This provides a perspective on how to deal with a given situation. The person defines the situation as given and takes action. The action is then interpreted to see if it resolves the problem. Finally, one would move to reinterpretation of the situation and ultimately take action as an interaction activity.

Smith and Bugni (2006: 134) suggest that architects who pursue social design are those whose projects depict a strong sense of symbolic interactionist tenets and values. The researcher believes that this approach is applicable to any building typology as long as the architect is a disciple of symbolic interaction theory. All disciples of this theory have the common goal of creating buildings and places that are highly symbolic, culturally reinforcing, people-centred, and problem-solving. Subscribing to symbolic interaction theory as a design philosophy means that one seeks to understand how and why people attach meanings to designed physical forms and how these forms can impact lives in positive ways.

In line with the drive to create meaningful places that are reflective and expressive of the self, design professionals create forms to convey specific meanings and expressions. This approach is exemplified by projects that provide for fun and entertainment (e.g., Disney World in Orlando and the Mandalay Bay Hotel in Las Vegas), neighbourliness and community (e.g., new urbanist communities like Seaside, Florida), worship of the supernatural (e.g., the Chartres Cathedral in France), and rest and retirement (e.g., Sun City, Arizona) (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 134).

Smith and Bugni (2006: 134) identify three goals for design professionals that subscribe to symbolic interaction theories:

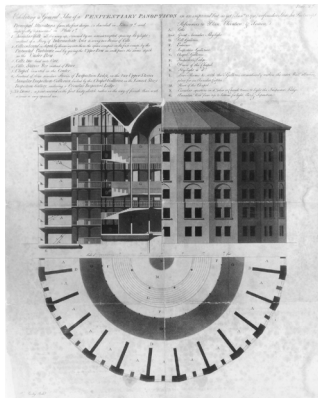
1. to preserve an existing thought system or way of life;
2. to control and, in extreme cases, punish people; and
3. to promote social change.

These are each explored in turn.

Preservation of a thought system or way of life draws on cultural and social norms and practices. This can be considered to be a definition of self through existing and past

identities using architectural forms that reflect and reinforce existing meanings of the world and the universe. For example, a home can be intentionally designed to reflect and preserve one's culture of origin (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 128). Civic spaces can adopt a similar approach where traditional forms become the generator of space design.

Architecture of control is used in numerous situations such as controlling movement in space to accentuate views, controlling access to deal with security concerns or maintain order or to control occupants such as in jails. Apartheid architecture and planning represented negative use of this design philosophy where spaces were designed to separate races. Architecture and urban design were used as a controlling tool. Marginalised groups of all types — racial and ethnic minorities, the disabled, and the poor — have historically been denied access to particular public places and facilities, resulting in segregated schooling, diners, public restrooms, swimming pools, and transportation. In such cases, architecture can be seen as a means of control by those in power (Rendell, Penner and Borden, 2000).



The Panopticon Penitentiary (Fig. 3.4.4), designed in 1787 by Jeremy Bentham and subsequently widely copied (e.g., the now-abandoned Statesville Prison in Joliet, Illinois), was devised so that large numbers of prisoners could be observed at all times (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 134).

**Fig. 3.4.4: Bentham's Plan and Text for the Panopticon Penitentiary, 1787 (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 138)**

The prison was designed to control extreme offenders by means of solitary confinement. While this represents negative usage of control, it is possible to use it positively in public spaces to achieve a better reflection of self.

Symbolic interaction theory has also been employed by architects to convey and propagate social change. Architecture has been used as a decolonisation tool and to propagate a new national identity in public buildings across the world, especially legislative complexes. Since the end of the Second World War numerous countries

have achieved independence and some marked this by building new legislative complexes. The decision to construct new parliamentary buildings has been and always will be significant, especially in countries where poverty is a challenge to the state.

Whether these are old or new complexes, the ideas behind their design align with the symbolism interaction theory in that they all tried to portray social change. Legislative complexes that have adopted this approach include but are not limited to the US Capitol, and the Sri Lankan Parliament and Papua New Guinea parliamentary complex. In all these cases, the symbolism of national identity was of primary importance.



**Plate 3.4.5: US Capitol (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 140)**

Latrobe, often referred to as America's first architect, was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson to design the White House and the US Capitol building (Plate 3.4.5).

His so-called “plain design” for architecture, which merged the ideology of ancient Greece with industrialised nineteenth-century America, clearly reflected a new country and a changed vision of life (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 139). This was a symbol of independence from the British Empire and declaration of a new democracy and republicanism.

The building design was conceived at a time when the norm in architectural language was traditionality, detailing and grandeur. In contrast, Latrobe opted for simplicity, geometric power, and rationalism and his style appealed to a young, enthusiastic nation in search of originality (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 139).

Post-modernism was conceived as a reaction to modernism which was considered to be minimalist, anonymous, monotonous, cold, and stylistically boring. It was regarded as a fresh approach to architecture that symbolised change. Postmodernist architecture was often “doubly coded,” symbolically part modern and part traditional, complex and contradictory in meaning, and sometimes sleek, asymmetrical, humorous, and ambiguous in form (Baudrillard, 1994; Habermas, 1989; Jencks, 1977).



The allegoric and metaphoric features of postmodernism were personified in the Portland, Oregon, municipal building (Plate 3.4.6). This building combined an efficient and responsive internal design with a colourful and decorated external image intended to generate interest as well as welcome onlookers.

**Plate 3.4.6: Portland, Oregon, Municipal Building**  
(Source: Smith and Bugni, 2006: 142)



### 3.4.4 Architecture as agency

As noted previously, symbolic interaction theorists believe that human beings interact with the built environment, by design or not, in a similar fashion to which they interact amongst themselves.

When something is an agent it implies that it is a subject and not an object in a storyline or development – a process defined as subjectification. An agent takes part in unfolding events and contributes to the life of a story or development. Subjectification of architecture implies that it acts as an agent. In this instance, architecture talks back and influences human beings as much as they talk and influence it. An example is one's emotional and psychological response on entering a space with red, yellow or black walls (Plate 3.4.7).



**Plate 3.4.7: Coloured Interior spaces evoke various feelings (Source: Google: Coloured spaces. Accessed 7/10/2016 – 16:40Hrs)**

Black is symbolic of dark moods whilst a colour like yellow brightens and uplifts one's spirit and red is a sombre one. Symbolic interaction theory suggests that physical objects and places not only provide the setting or backdrop for conduct, but that humans have the capacity to assign agency to these designed forms (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 143). People interact with human and non-human objects, designed or natural, through their behaviour around them.

One of the world's great architectural feats, Stonehenge, a Neolithic ruin on the Salisbury Plain in southern England, was built as early as 2950 BC. Remarkable for



its time, as well as today, it is 330 feet in diameter and contains large stones — some as big as 6.5 feet wide and 13 feet tall — connected by stone lintels (Plate 3.4.8) (ibid).



**Plate 3.4.8: Stonehenge: A World Heritage Site**  
(Source: Smith and Bugni, 2006: 143)

Its popularity around the world is due to more than just its history but its ability to talk back to those that interact with its magnificent engineering and awesome size and scale.

Questions persist as to how it was built, how the stones were transported to the site and the general workmanship that went into it. Indeed, many wonder about its very existence and its relationship to cosmology.

Such inquisitiveness about objects, designed or natural, spurs those who interact with them or have heard about them to think, reflect, feel, and act; hence their agency. This is the power of architecture as an agent, a message reflector and carrier of those around it – a reflection of self.

Symbolic interaction theory has something of value to offer the design practitioner, both in concept and design implementation, and those in the field have much to gain from the application of this theory, including the possibility of testing and advancing their own theoretical ideas, the opportunity to collaborate with other groups of professionals on problems of common interest, and ultimately, a better chance of improving the places where people work, live, study, pray, and play (Smith and Bugni, 2006: 143). It also offers opportunities to those that teach architecture in assigning projects to their students.

The diversity of built environments is determined by individuals and their communities in the context of their ecological settings. The case study for this research study is an African setting. This demands an understanding of the African context based on African identity and its symbolic environment; hence, the search for an African value

system through understanding Afrocentricity. Afrocentricity is a call for back to basics in terms of how Africans construe their world..... how Africans perceive their world; hence, the importance of reviewing and contextualising symbolic interaction theory studies and how they impact on Afrocentricity. Identity is formulated through the manner in which individuals perceive the world around them.

### 3.5 AFROCENTRIC SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY

The concept of Afrocentric requires clarification with respect to the target end product. In this study, the end product is the built form that is steeped in the values of the African. This section begins by conceptualising Afrocentric in the context of the built environment. The aim is to craft a model for identification techniques for placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources through linking the centrality of symbolism and Afrocentricity in defining place identity.

Having conceptualised identity, its impact on the built environment and its linkage to symbolic interaction theory, the discussion turns to the African context with respect to the definition of an African. Human beings are social animals and an African is no exception, but the question is: what and who is an African and why? How can the identity of an African be defined?

Like many other studies in Afrocentric knowledge circles, this study seeks African solutions to African-centred problems through an African-centred paradigm that is considered to be a logical starting point in knowledge generation. The concept of Afrocentricity is its point of departure. Afrocentricity is a paradigm (Asante, 2007; Monteiro-Ferreira, 2009: 327 - 336; Dastile, 2013: 93 - 104) and not a religion as detractors such as Clarence Walker (2001) would claim. The rationale for this approach is to eviscerate the seemingly insatiable import of Western hegemonic forms drawn from colonial built environments as part of an African-centred de-colonial paradigm.

This section first defines Afrocentricity in the context of the theory of symbolism. In this context, symbolism is considered as a product of social phenomena in which specific groups share a common world view.

### **3.5.1 Defining Afrocentricity in the context of symbolism**

Afrocentric scholars argue that African decolonisation represents the reclamation of African voices through recognition of the heritage and knowledge systems brought about by oral tradition (Dastile, 2013: 93). This study examines marginalised architecture that tells the African story. This calls for an understanding of Afrocentrists' paradigmatic approach.

Mazama defines Afrocentrism as a conscious, quality thought and analytical process based on Africans viewing themselves as subjects that are agents in the world (Mazama in Dastile, 2013: 95). Mazama (2013: 95) adds that Afrocentrism allows for a trans-generational, trans-continental explanation of phenomena which would be a useful orientation to issues to do with how traditional elements are identified in built environments in various African contexts. The most important point about the Afrocentric approach to the study of built environments and consequently their design is the manner in which it raises conscious thought as a tool for data gathering and analysis. This is discussed in more detail under the section dealing with the study's research method.

Afrocentricity can be considered to be quality of thought (Karega), a paradigm (Mazama), a perspective (Asante), or a metatheory (Modupe) (Asante, 2008: 5). Ama Mazama posits that Afrocentricity is not merely a worldview or even a theory as such; rather, it is a paradigm that results in the reconceptualisation of the social and historical reality of African people (Mazama in Asante, 2008: 9).

Human beings have innate ability to use one thing to represent another; the process begins with language which is the basis of communication. This then is the basis for the definition of symbolism. To be an agent and in the process achieve the status of a subject in the telling of his/her story and formulate an understanding of the world around him/her, an individual must have a common understanding of the universe – a

common symbolisation of creation and the creator. The very definition of symbolism must have a common meaning across various social groups. Symbolism thus lays the foundation for an Afrocentric project since it is derived from a common understanding of communication between fellow human beings.

### **3.5.2 Physiognomies of the African Project**

Having defined Afrocentricity, the focus shifts to the physiognomies of an Afrocentric project. Most of this section is drawn from Asante's *Afrocentric Manifesto* (2007). Asante (2007:41) argues that the minimum characteristics for an Afrocentric project include:

- An interest in psychological location;
- Commitment to finding the African subject place;
- The defence of African cultural elements;
- A commitment to lexical refinement; and
- A commitment to correct the dislocation.

These are very pertinent features with respect to this study as they contribute to purveyors of Afrocentric built environments.

Afrocentrist philosophy argues that one's analysis is more often than not related to where one's mind is located (Asante, 2007: 42). This view stems from the fact that one can identify if a person has a culturally centred position by the manner in which they relate to African information. If an individual speaks of Africans as the "other", it is easy to see that he/she views Africans other than him/herself. This is one way in which the dislocation works. In essence, it is a psychological distancing from being part of the group under discussion, in this case African.

The concept of location is used by Afrocentrists to denote the psychological, cultural, historical or personal place occupied by a person at any given point in history (ibid). Being in location implies being fixed, temporarily or permanently, in a certain historical place (ibid). This is a useful definition with respect to the study's core focus. For one to fully appreciate African spatial qualities, one has to be psychologically located. When the Afrocentrist says that it is necessary to discover one's location, it is always in reference to whether or not the person is in a centred or marginal place with regard to his or her culture (ibid).

This implies that when a person is operating from the location of the oppressed, that person views the world and the universe through the oppressor's lenses and the dislocation.

Too often discussion of African phenomena has been predetermined by the European perspective i.e., predetermined or even pre-programmed by Eurocentric experiences and worldview. Thus, the aim of Afrocentric agency is to demonstrate a powerful commitment to finding the African subject a place in almost every event, text, and idea (ibid).

The challenge lies in the identity stratosphere since identity is partially determined by who we are and who we want to be, besides being defined by others. One might know who one is today but it is a challenging task to define what one will be tomorrow. The researcher does not fully subscribe to this since built form architecture can be considered to be lifestyle frozen in time. This argument would be drawn from human behavioural studies by academics like Amos Rapoport (1990: 2 - 20).

This characteristic alludes to the central issue of how history and culture are produced and maintained. It is about taking pride in one's connectedness to the creation of the universe. Colonialism brought about the superiority of Eurocentric ideologies over those of the colonised. The time has come for the colonised to reclaim their heritage and the built environment must be part of that social drive. In some periods in the past and to some extent in the present, neo-colonialism caused African music, art, architecture, dress, food, etc. to be considered as inferior. The Afrocentrist is concerned with protection and defence of African cultural values and elements as part of the human project (Asante, 2007: 43).

The search for traditional built environment placemaking elements, especially in African settings, is considered by this researcher to be part of the Afrocentrist effort. The end product is the creation of African built environments that exude Afrocentric identity.

Afrocentrists typically stress the centrality of an African as a subject rather than an object. This implies that the author of a text on architecture, design, and planning etc.

must be in tune with African realities. In architectural terms, calling a house a “hut” misrepresents African realities. The idea of a house in the English language leads one to assume a building with a kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, and recreational spaces, but the African concept has a different representation. The African house is a compound of structures with one structure for sleeping, one for storage, and another for guests (Asante, 2007: 43).

Afrocentrists are dedicated cadres of the new African narrative – one that is de-Europeanised. In this regard, the Afrocentrist scholar assesses the state of research and then intervenes in an appropriate manner. In the attempt to marginalise African history, literature, behaviour and economics, amongst other fields, have been deliberately falsified to create a sense of inferiority; hence, the marginalisation of architectural forms and planning systems that have their roots in African ideologies and ways of life. Such falsification has been central to the racist ideology of disempowerment of anything African in text and outlook. It is one of the greatest conspiracies in the history of the world because what was tacitly agreed upon, by writer after writer was that Africa should be marginalised in the literature and downgraded when it seemed that the literature spoke with high regard for the continent (Asante, 2007: 44).

This approach applies to architecture where African spaces and forms were and are still considered to be inferior. It is exemplified by the myth that has sustained Eurocentric hegemony surrounding the origins of Greek civilisation. This has now been shown to be an exaggeration devised by scholars with resolute intent to prove and preserve European superiority (ibid).

The five characteristics of Afrocentricity point to sustained dedication to the idea of an African being equal to all human beings without claiming superiority over other peoples of the world. The African world view needs to stake its claim under the sun and built form should be part of this endeavour. As part of African identity construction, the study now examines the world of Afrocentricity and African identity.

### 3.5.3 Afrocentricity and African Identity

Africa is the cradle of humanity and civilisation. This thesis was hypothesised by great historians such as Cheikh Anta Diop (1974) and supported by various Afrocentric academics and researchers, including Molefe Kete Asante (2007; 2008).

Indeed, Africa is the home of all living humans. Furthermore, it is the source of many of the technological innovations that laid the foundation for modern industrial and informational societies (Asante, 2007: 9).

This conjecture struck at the heart of Eurocentric racial dogmata that put Europeans at the core of human development and history. The past half century has seen racial barriers crumble along with the doctrines that support it; however, there are still remnants of resistance in various fields and architecture still has a long way to go in this regard in various parts of the African continent, especially those that were formerly colonised.

There is a need to redefine and affirm the African identity and contextualise it in the built environment, with specific reference to Afrocentricity. Some scholars argue that Africa must be studied from within in order to reclaim its identities (Mafeje in Dastile, 2013: 97). This study aimed to understand, define and affirm an African identity and how it should be the generator of built form.

The definition of an African can be derived from Afrocentrists' pursuit of African people's total freedom from European degradation and domination. This engenders itself to the Egyptian and Greek concepts of *djed* and *stasis*, which, in both cases, imply a strong place to stand (Asante, 2007: 15). From this argument, Afrocentrists define an African as one who is part of a community, in contemporary terms, that was historically enslaved, exploited, and colonised because of skin colour, and a community that lost some control of the intellectual, social, philosophical, and religious ideas it inherited (Asante, 2007: 16; Mazama, 2003a: 210).

It is important to clarify the notion of place and consequently, identity. Unwin (2009) defines place as a product of organising activities to make sense of the world human

beings inhabit. This explanation enables one to tie a place to given societies and their ecological systems. Every society uses essential symbols which resemble the key ideas, attitudes and values that unite its members. Places are key symbols of many cultures around the world that shape the social, economic, religious, political, psychological aspects of people's world view (Sone: 7 March 2016: 4).

The study of a place is therefore critical in understanding people's cultural and spiritual experience and provides invaluable information about the different sub-cultural zones of numerous traditions. Enongene Mirabeau Sone classifies oceans, mountains, forests, grasslands, desserts, lakes, and rivers as the generalised natural areas (ibid). "[We owe our] being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains, and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land ...." (Thabo Mbeki in a speech at the adoption of the Republic of South Africa Constitutional Bill on May 8, 1996 in Cape Town in Sone, 7 March 2016: 5).

Mbeki alluded to the importance of place to human beings. This research focuses on Africans – "son of the soil", "*mntwan'enhlabathi*", "*mwana wevhu*". Most Africans attach symbolism to the physical nature of their landscape. Rivers, mountains, trees, flowers, water bodies surrounding them become symbols of being – definers of place and attachment to the creation of the world and the greater universe. It is this that makes symbolism an important aspect of belonging in an African sense. Symbolism is a basis for human communication.

In general, identity can be defined as the distinctive character of a given individual or one that is shared by all members of a particular social category or group (Rummens in Sone: 7 March 2016: 18). This argument ties in with the one discussed earlier with regard to social identity.

Lessons can be derived from scholars such as Mafeje who observes that the social sciences suffer from what he calls an 'epistemology of alterity'. This is explained as scholarship that is rooted in Western knowledge systems. Africanity is posited as a counter-knowledge system where Africans think, speak, and do things for themselves in the first place. This does not imply unwillingness to learn from others but refusal to



be hegemonised by others, irrespective of colour or race..... by insisting on Africanness the Africans are staking their claim (Mafeje in Dastile, 2013: 97).

One would argue that to achieve a sense of belonging in as far as built environments are concerned an African must be an active participant in the generation of ideas that inform how built forms are conceived. In other words, the African must be an agent of the design process for Afrocentric built environments to become possible. An agent in this sense implies a human being who is capable of acting independently in his or her own interests. In this context “agency” denotes the ability to provide the psychological and cultural resources necessary for the advancement of human freedom. Asante (2007: 40) posits that commitment is required from Africans to become economic, cultural, political, and social agents; the researcher would add architectural in order for the continent to reclaim its history and identity.

The Afrocentric project and the manner in which it advocates for ensuring a legitimate place for an African subject can be grounded by concepts such as symbolism with regard to perceptions and images and provides a basis and placefulness for concepts such as identity. The identification of placemaking elements in Afrocentric sources can be greatly assisted by this conceptualisation of symbolism. It also provides the bedrock for other culturally connected concepts such as metaphors, proverbs, myths etc. and thus offers the cogs for Afrocentric design concepts that deal with African identity.

#### **3.5.4 Maat and the Afrocentric world view**

The symbolism approach to built form can also be achieved through the concept of maat – goddess of the unalterable laws of heaven. This cosmological creation belief system was practised in classical Egyptian culture and has been studied and extended by researchers such as Denise Martin (2008) and others into the greater African continent. In the current study, it is employed to provide more insight into how it can provide the analytical tools to identify placemaking elements derived from Afrocentric sources.

Realisation of an African as an agent can be reinforced by acknowledgement and realisation of the very creation – the cosmological phenomenology. As noted in

Section 4.2, understanding the cosmological orientation of an African can also be achieved through the Egyptian maat system. Maat is a comprehensive construct that existed throughout ancient Egyptian civilisation (Martin, 951). In ancient Egypt, maat appears both as the abstract concept of truth and correctness in the cosmic and social spheres and in anthropomorphic form as a goddess (Maat) (Faraone and Teeter, 2004: 177). Denise Martin (2008) developed the concept of maat into an analytical tool to study African cosmological knowledge and how it relates to cultural expressions.

This study advances the idea that these cultural expressions can include built forms and similarly be interactions between self/architecture as argued in sub-sections 3.4.3 and 3.4.4. Consequentially, one can argue that the cosmological orientation of an African is reflected by built form and nature and vice-versa. Some researchers suggest that maat can be applied to establish a pattern of knowledge in various classical African societies as part of decolonisation (Martin, 2008). African cultural production is a complex phenomenon that is at the apex of a feast of senses due to its rich storytelling, textile weaving, carving, constructing, dancing, singing, body adornment, and music-making traditions (ibid). Approaching the built environment from this perspective offers a holistic perspective and enhances the Afrocentric agenda. From a Western perspective, African cultural production would be viewed from the various lenses of a single discipline such as art, philosophy, or anthropology, limiting the holistic approach that is inherent in maat which has simultaneous cosmological, social, cultural and personal domains.

Researchers on African cultural production agree that although there are variations in beliefs, practices, and customs across the continent, there is a distinguishable African ontology among cultural groups. This ontology is primarily a religious one and consists of five elements: god, spirits, man, plants/animals, and phenomena (Martin, 2008: 954).

Epistemologically, this study benefits from understanding the relationship between culture and the creation of knowledge, that is, how culture determines what is known, experienced, and understood as knowledge (Gyekye, 1996). The challenge with this epistemological approach is identifying the cultural footprint of the current knowledge base or modern sciences – natural, human, and social – because they were developed

during the period of Western accession and domination of global trade, politics, and culture (Martin, 2008: 954).

Dialogues on perceptions, sources, and the structure of African knowledge in light of Western philosophical ideas identify three major lines of thinking within African philosophy, namely, traditional African philosophy, contemporary African philosophy, and Africana philosophy. Each school has conceptual boundaries, but each offers valid points for the discussion of classical knowledge (Martin, 2008: 955).

Martin (ibid) adds that maat can be a useful tool in providing an epistemological base in that it enables the full manifestation of sacred African knowledge to be recognised while offering intellectual flexibility to explore relationships. In this way, maat allows for a synergy of classical African cosmological, philosophical, artistic and social ideas to be reinterpreted in a largely systematic manner. This epistemological orientation enables one to analyse knowledge as it relates to the creation, maintenance, and restoration of a sacred order steeped in African tradition and thus provides the grounds for the identification of placemaking elements in traditional African built environments.

Martin (2008) highlights, several dimensions of African knowledge created by manifestations of maat in Egyptian culture:

- The sacred or spiritual/religious;
- The symbolic and visual;
- The moral;
- The functional; and
- The community.

All have the potential to contribute to the identification of placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources that can be deployed in design processes as an embodiment of an Afrocentric identity in contemporary civic spaces. What follows is a discussion of these dimensions and how they can achieve this goal. These dimensions are distinct yet interrelated. The sacred or spiritual dimension is found in The Book of Knowing the Creations, in which maat exists before and informs the formation of the cosmos. Maat is the intention of thought of the Supreme, and everything flows from this intention (Martin, 2008: 957).

This suggests that the universe is a pre-determined, harmonious whole. The orderly whole in which classical African knowledge operates is contextually bound to the elements, workings, processes, and cycles of the sacred universe, rather than to an abstract law (ibid). This implies that Africans have an innate religious existence (Mbiti, 1992 and Martin, 2008).

The symbolic is the fundamental element of knowledge used by the ancient Egyptians when representing their understanding of the universe. ... when an image, a collection of letters, a word or phrase, a gesture, a single sound, a musical harmony or melody have a significance through evocation ... (then symbolism comes into being) (Martin, 2008: 958).

This act calls for something beyond human intellect and brings into play the raw being of the human heart, evocation of the human spirit and emotions of being – thus the symbol becomes a conveyor of knowledge drawn from memory.

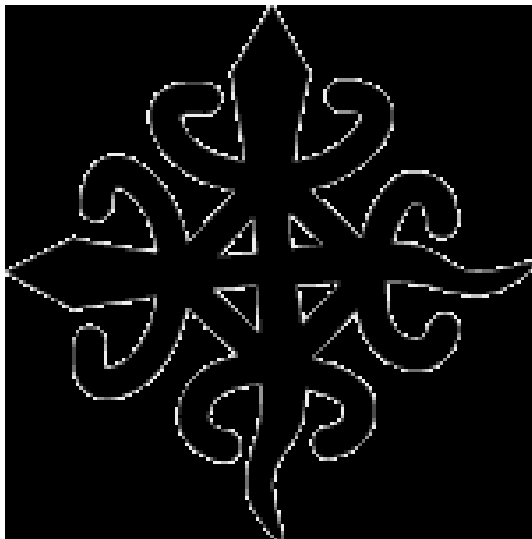
The moral dimension of knowledge is found in the declaration of innocence. This dimension calls upon human beings, throughout their lifetime, to refrain from taking certain actions that may hinder their pre-destined path to the gods. A similar approach to this cosmic advice is one that connotes communal morality. The Zulu Declaration of Self along with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of proverbs dealing with good and just behaviour affirms the value and place of morality in many African societies (Martin, 2008: 961). The moral dimension affirms judgement of one's actions and words on an equal moral pedestal.

Maat reveals the functional dimension of classical/traditional African knowledge because it integrates the sacred with the mundane or secular situation. The philosophical idea is actualised in thought, speech, behaviour, creating, building, and living, giving each a broader meaning and context (Martin, 2008: 961). In most African cultures, symbols were stamped onto cloth, walls of buildings, artefacts and tools for everyday use such as shields and knobkerries.

The communality of African societies is summarised by the Zulu Declaration of Self which states:

I am sovereign of my life;  
 My neighbour is sovereign of his life;  
 Society is a collective sovereignty;  
 It exists to ensure that my neighbour and I realise the promise of being human;  
 I have no right to anything I deny my neighbour;  
 I am all; all are me .....  
 I can commit no greater crime than to frustrate life's purpose for my neighbour  
 (Asante and Abarry, 1996: 373)

The Akan *adinkra* symbol, *funtummireku*, depicts two crocodiles with a single stomach. The crocodiles struggle for food that goes into the same stomach. The stomach represents the community which is a unitary entity (Fig. 3.5.1). A close analysis reveals some tensions between the interests of the community and those of individuals (Martin, 2008: 962). The relationship between the individual and the community is a symbiotic one where one needs the other to survive and thus create knowledge that occurs in the human context.



**Fig. 3.5.1: Siamese crocodiles – symbol of democracy and unity** (Source: Google Copyright © 2001-2007 Well-Tempered Web Design. Accessed 10/04/2016 – 15:10)

Within the African ontology, a force permeates all the five dimensions discussed and by extrapolation, the whole universe. This force is accessed by some humans through the spirit. Through this force, the elements are balanced (Martin, 2008: 963). This entails swinging between harmony and disharmony as in life and death; happiness and sorrow, etc.

Martin (2008: 964) contends that, in the unseen realm of classical African knowledge, phenomena exist outside the physical world whose roots are in the spiritual one. Instances such as altered states, dreams, visions, and life forms from other dimensions are acknowledged as sources of knowledge (Some, 1994).

All these traditional or classical knowledge systems are fraught with symbolism across African cultures – symbolism that architects and other professionals in the built

environment could find useful when designing built forms, especially contemporary civic spaces whose identity reverberates beyond the local. Symbolism and interpretation of the universe may vary in detail due to varying cosmic details and geographical and climatic factors as these have a significant impact on individuals and societies. The identity extracted thus varies from one society to another. Issues relating to Afrocentric identity and place identity are examined below.

Symbolism is the best way to attach a human being, as an individual or group, to a place as it is a reflection/expression of self-nature. It therefore offers an opportunity for individuals or groups to define and assume ownership of place, thereby giving it a place identity. In designing civic spaces, it is important to study the psychic sense of common belonging and a set of symbols to capture it.

One of the characteristics of an Afrocentric project is commitment to finding the African subject place. This demands that an African subject be attached to a specific place under the sun. Fortunately, this is an innate ability of all human beings as social animals. As noted earlier, symbolism is a basis for human communication. It can also be argued that, by nature, a human being is a “*homo symbolicus*”, a symbolising, conceptualising and meaning-seeking animal (Sone, 7 March 2016: 6).

Given this line of argument, a mountain, river, cave, tree, stars and the greater universe, in short, nature can be regarded as one of the greatest symbols. Nature provides bonding qualities with a number of words representing key abstract qualities and phenomena which have the most significant emotional and psychic influence on individuals and groups (Sone: 7 March 2016: 7).

The centrality of place in the history of cultures and nations gives it an important role when dealing with identity as a social construct with respect to individuals and groups. As observed by various scholars, place is more than just a location (Hague and Jenkins, 2005: 4). In many African societies, natural places are filled with symbolism and meaning. These symbols go beyond the physical; they are religious, mythical and spiritual. To early humankind, the earth was a divine creation of the gods and the gods manifest the “different modalities of the sacred in the very structure of the world and of cosmic phenomena”. The manifestation of the earth’s different ‘modalities’ and the

'religious value' attached to these made the world one great and vast symbol (Sone, 7 March, 2016: 8).

What do the different natural features of the earth and universe symbolise in various social and cultural communities around the world? Were professionals in the built environment to decode these symbols, this would add value and promote the continuity of placeness that this study intends to unearth with specific reference to Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. Such decoding would assist the identification of placemaking elements in traditional African settings.

Maat provides valuable insights into African cosmological orientation. The inferences drawn from the symbolic interpretation of the Afrocentric cosmology give professionals who consider using elements drawn from African cultures in their totality as part of identity construction in the built form design process, a head start.

Africans have been negated by white racial domination for far too long. There is no better or more expressive way of redressing such domination than through the built environment. The marginalisation that has taken place goes beyond face value. It has entailed the obliteration of the presence, meaning, activities, or images of an African (Asante, 2007: 41).

One could argue that placing the African on the fringes of human development represented deliberate destruction of African spirituality and the material personality – objectification of Africans so as to deny them their rightful place in the universe. This study proposes that Africans should be the subjects and authors of the built environments they consume. This entails finding tools to identify placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources that can be used as generators of contemporary placemaking design of civic spaces/buildings that reflect Afrocentric identity.

The concept of Afrocentricity confronts new challenges, including:

- Debunking the notion that particularistic positions are universal.

- It is not necessary to resemble European culture in order to be civilised or human. European hegemony, whether in dress, fashion, art, culture or economics is not a universal moment but a historical moment.
- The discourse around the value of multiculturalism in a heterogeneous, industrialised nation.
  - The bonds that hold societies together cannot be forced acceptance of Eurocentric hegemony. Multiculturalism therefore cannot be considered to be white culture above or before any other; it is the creation of a space for all cultures (Asante, 2007: 53). Mutuality is the hallmark of such a new political and intellectual venture because no one is left behind (ibid).
- The continued re-explanation of central Afrocentrist ideology so as to reaffirm its original and fundamental mission and thus continue to confront new challenges and shape new long-term interests.
  - This implies Africans reconnecting to the cultural matrix that helps to unshackle European hegemony (Mazama, 2003a:18).

These challenges are applicable across all fields of study and have to be taken on board by professionals in the built environment. Furthermore, African identity conceptualisation is grounded by the need to tie an African to a geographical location that is embedded in an African symbolism and psyche. This in turn provides a valuable resource for the design of Afrocentric built environments. The current study takes up the challenge by investigating tools to identify placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric foundations. This entails delving into the concept of Afrocentric architectural identity which is discussed in the following chapter.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

The restoration of Afrocentric placemaking and architecture requires creativity and acknowledgement of the global situation that Africa finds itself in. This entails the identification of appropriate theories and concepts which this chapter focused on. Placemaking and architecture driven by collective centredness was advanced as the leading paradigm supported by concepts and theories driven by the desire to belong



collectively, especially when viewed from the perspective of civic spaces. It is postulated that the ambience created by civic spaces that acknowledge individual centredness will enable the restoration of Afrocentric, postcolonial built forms.

The following chapter presents a chronological account of the forces that have influenced Afrocentric placemaking and architectural processes, beginning with cosmological issues. These issues influenced the stratification of African societies and ultimately, the built form. The chapter also analyses how colonialism disrupted the natural precolonial developmental trajectory through narrating historical Afrocentricity in placemaking and architecture.

# CHAPTER FOUR: HISTORICAL NARRATIVE OF AFROCENTRICITY IN PLACEMAKING AND BUILT FORM

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter laid the foundation by presenting an in-depth review of the key theories and concepts employed by this study. These are driven by group perception of the world. The assumption is that that world is viewed from the centre of an individual and transposed into the public realm collectively by a group. The individual is thus at the centre of that perceived world. The centred system has corresponding built forms, from private through to public. The last chapter began by discussing the key concept of placemaking which is an expression of a centre. Collective centred places constitute placemaking and are a community product – for the people by the people. These concepts and theories were also viewed from an Afrocentric perspective.

One of the key ideas behind this research is to contribute towards decolonisation through the use of built environments. Decolonisation can only be understood in the context of colonialism and pre-colonial conditions. To this end, this study sequences events chronologically, from pre-colonisation, to colonisation and decolonisation. It examines what was in existence before colonisation and then analyses the effects of colonisation in order to identify a localised response to the contemporary design of built environments in African settings.

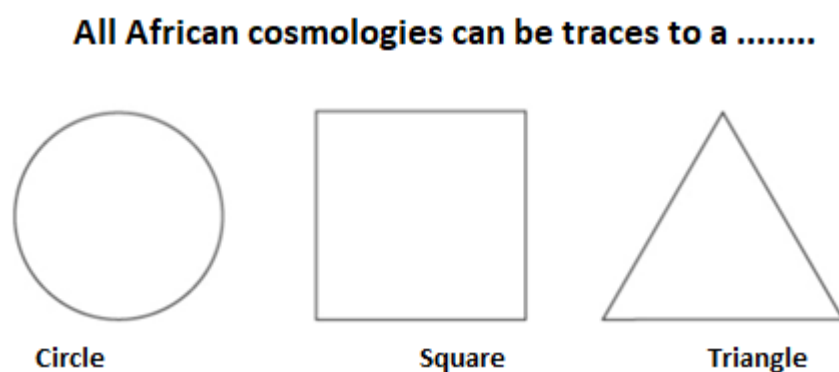
The questions addressed are: What was the nature of pre-colonial existence and how was it altered or destroyed by colonisation? What can be retrieved and used in the design of contemporary built environments to exude an Afrocentric ambience? What should be decolonised with respect to built environments? The answers to these questions would provide the context for the contemporary response to Afrocentric built environments. They will anchor an understanding of the pre-colonial condition which

this chapter addresses, beginning with African cosmology and thus setting a historical narrative of Afrocentricity in placemaking and built form.

The African worldview is an appropriate starting point because it embodies the belief systems that are an important part of the built environment. This section begins with an analytical study of African cosmology – the very beginning ..... creation of the universe from an African perspective.

## 4.2 THE AFRICAN COSMOLOGY

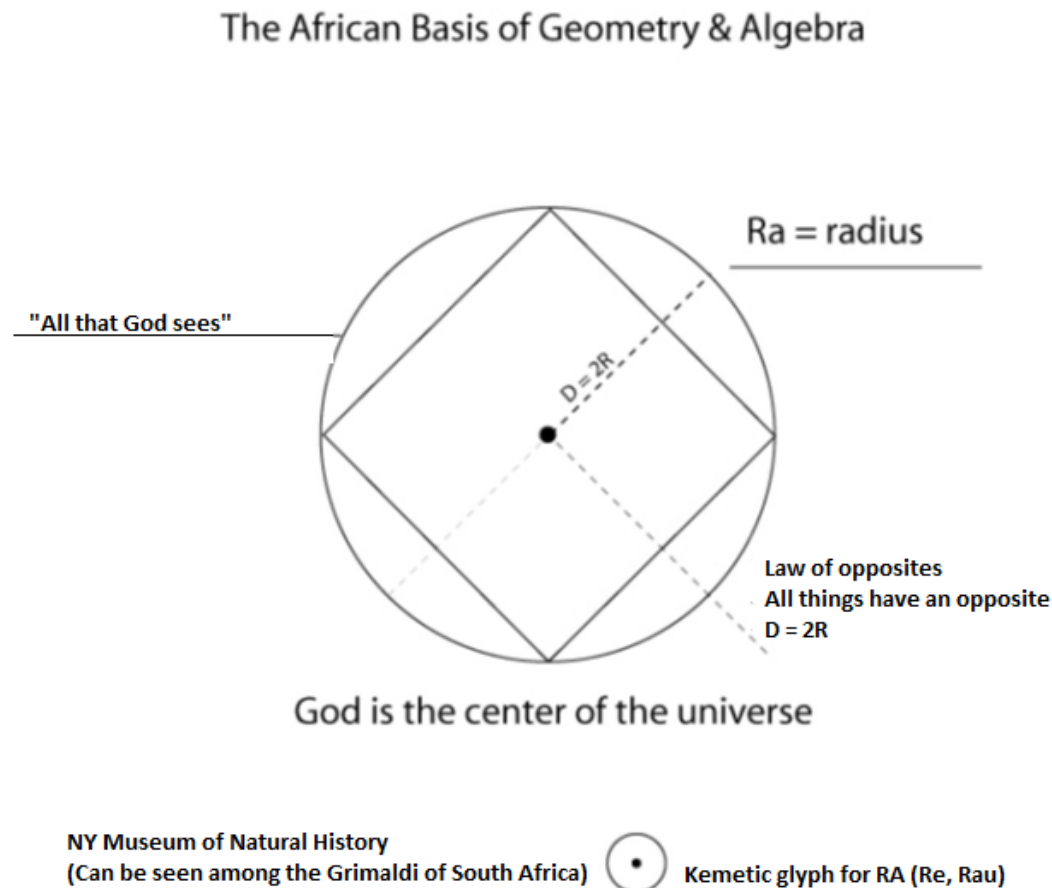
Human beings generally define themselves in terms of how they perceive the cosmos and this moulds their cultures. Cosmology is the foundational model for life itself, without which life has no meaning. This implies that understanding a people's world view is fundamental to unpacking their culture. Cosmology derives from the Greek word "cosmologia" which is made up of two components: *cosmos* = order and *logos* = plan, reason. It is the study of the universe in its totality, and by extension, humanity's place in it. Scientific investigations into cosmological phenomena were motivated by the desire to answer these questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? What is my purpose? What must I do to fulfil that purpose? (Imhotep, 2007: 18).



**Fig. 4.2.1: The three basic shapes that graphically summarise a methodology for how all the sciences can be taught in African Cosmology (Imhotep, 2007: 19)**

Asar Imhotep (*ibid*) argues that posing these questions and the natural pursuit of their answers led African ancestors to discover the foundations of the applied sciences: physics, mathematics, zoology, geology, astrophysics, quantum mechanics and

different aspects of health and biology. The answers can be summarised in a methodology in which all these sciences can be taught graphically using three basic shapes (Fig. 4.2.1):



**Fig. 4.2.2:**  
God is  
central in  
African  
cosmology  
(Imhotep,  
2007: 19)

Furthermore, it can be argued that the underlying tenets of the philosophy of practically all African spiritual systems can be presented through these shapes. This is the basis for sacred geometry. The figure below is an example of how the ancient Kmtjw (Egyptians) used this concept to represent God, geometry and moral character development at the same time (Imhotep, 2007: 19). The above cosmological order (Fig 4.2.2) is complemented by the astrological world of ancient Egypt, also known as Kemet or Kmtjw. Kmt means black. The similarities in the cosmological orientation of Africans are explained by migration from the Ethiopian Highlands to various parts of the world, particularly the three branches from East Africa (Figs. 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). The Bantus settled on the Cameroonian Highlands before their migrations southwards.

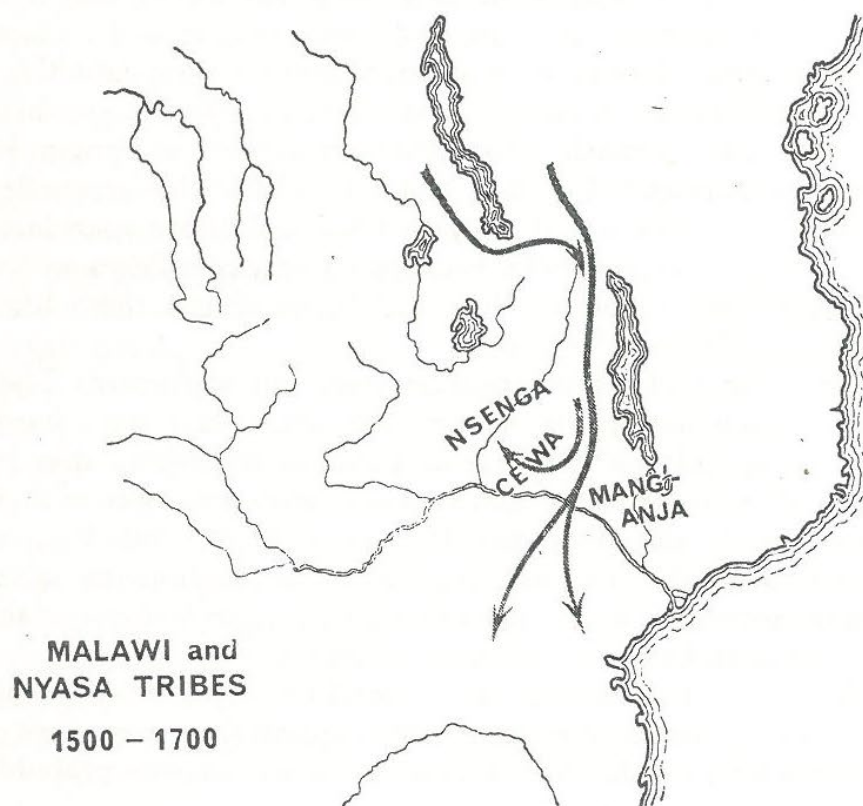
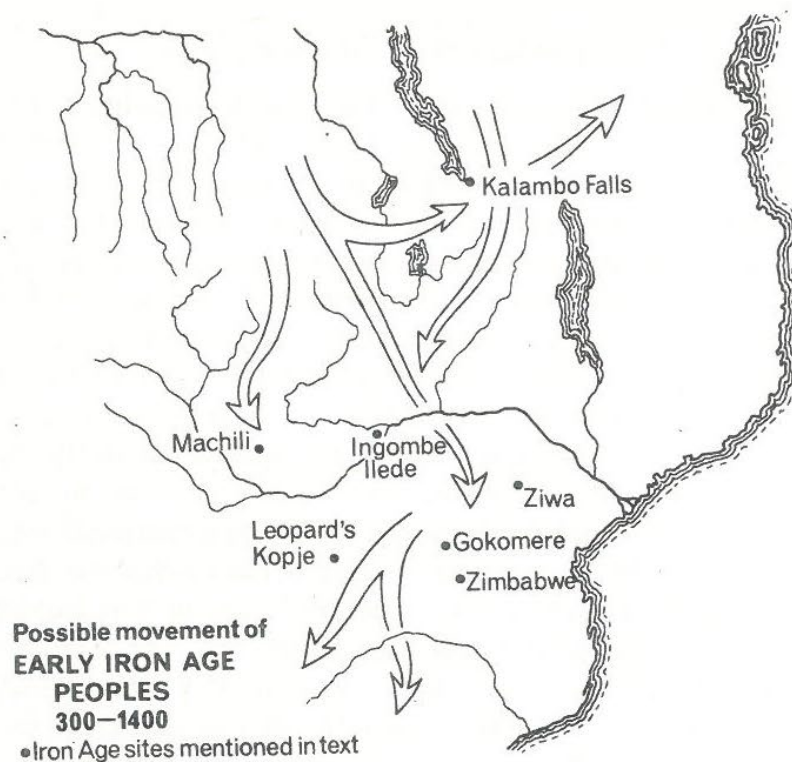


Fig. 4.2.3: Movement southward of early Bantu migrants (Wills, 1985: 130)

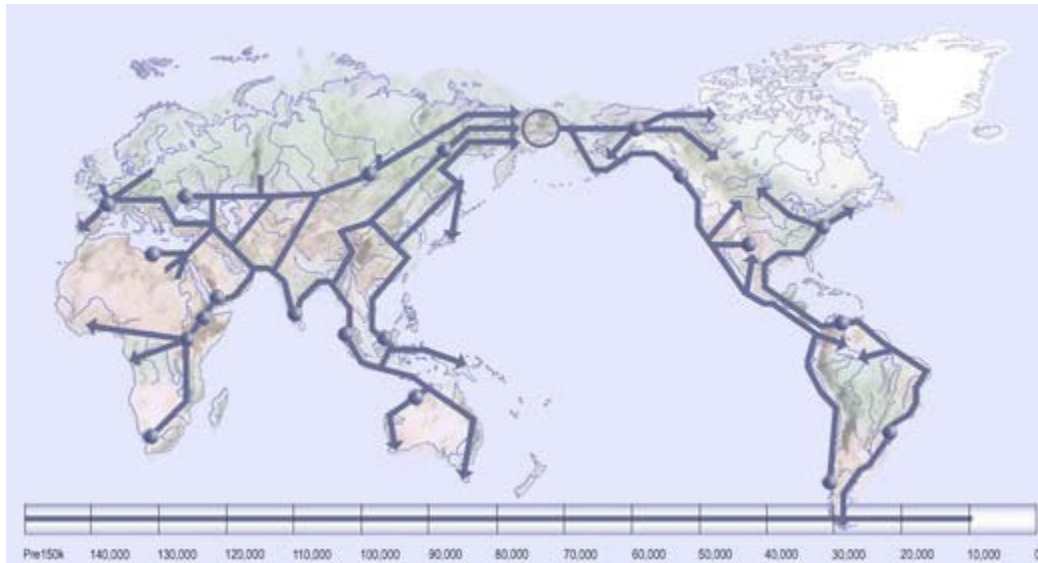


Fig. 4.2.4: The migration patterns from the Ethiopian Highlands (Google, accessed 27/6/2016)

As the following examples show, the above symbol of three geometric shapes is represented throughout the African continent:

The Dagara Cosmological Wheel (Fig. 4.2.5): The Dagara are the indigenous peoples that inhabit the West African nations of Ghana, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. Their cosmological system is described by the five elements of water, mineral, earth, fire, and nature.

#### DAGARA COSMOLOGICAL WHEEL

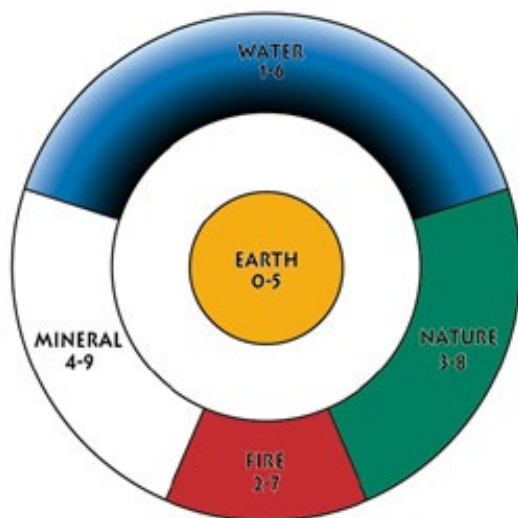


Fig. 4.2.5: The Dagara Cosmological Wheel (Imhotep, 2007: 20)

Accordingly, the Dagara people are categorised into these five elements determined by the number at the end of the year one was born. For example if one was born in 2006, the last digit is “6”, meaning they are classified as “mineral”.

African religious belief systems are peppered with the three graphic elements discussed earlier and some are variants such as those of the Ife of the Yoruba cosmological wheel.

Nonetheless, the Yoruba cosmology consists of a Supreme Being and numerous divinities called orisa as is the case in numerous African cosmologies. The other similarities with other cosmologies are a conglomeration of spirits, ancestral forces and psychic agencies; these are discussed later in this section.

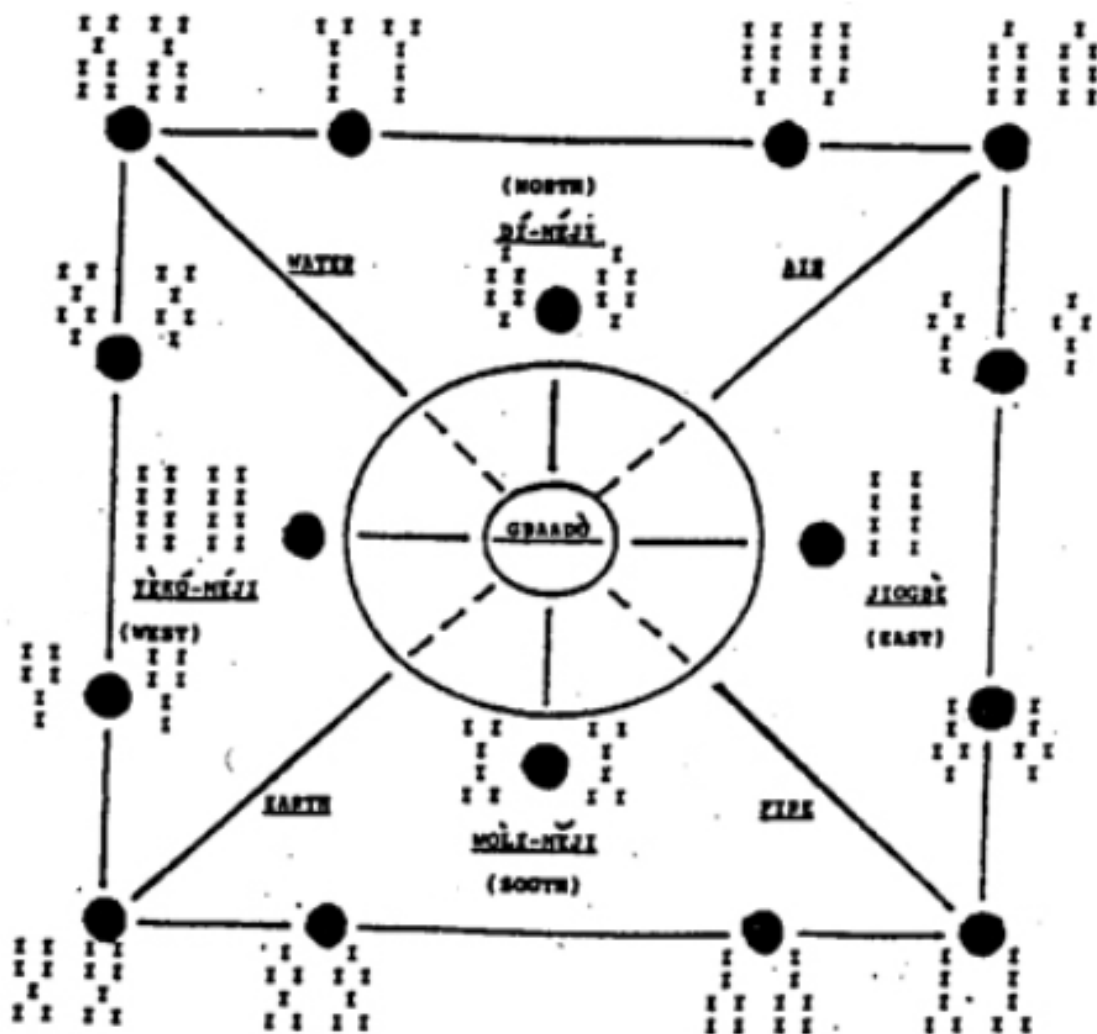


Fig. 4.2.6: The Ife of the Yoruba Cosmological Wheel (Imhotep, 2007: 21)

One of the major African groupings South of Sahara are the Bantu people who believe that human beings are living “suns” forever on a course of living-dead-living (Imhotep, 2007: 23). The birth of a child being the rising of the sun and the death of a person as

the setting of a sun. The human being's life is a continuous process of transformation, a going around and round (Fu-Kiau, 2001: 35).

This is a demonstration of rebirth after rebirth, reincarnation after reincarnation. Fig. 4.2.6 shows the Bantu-Kongo cosmological wheel with its inert energy of life and death. This wheel is typically African, with each section of the graph representing different stages in a life process and is critical in understanding the African world view. Imhotep (2007: 23 – 25), explains the process of birth and rebirth symbolised by the cosmological wheel in Fig. 4.2.7 as follows:

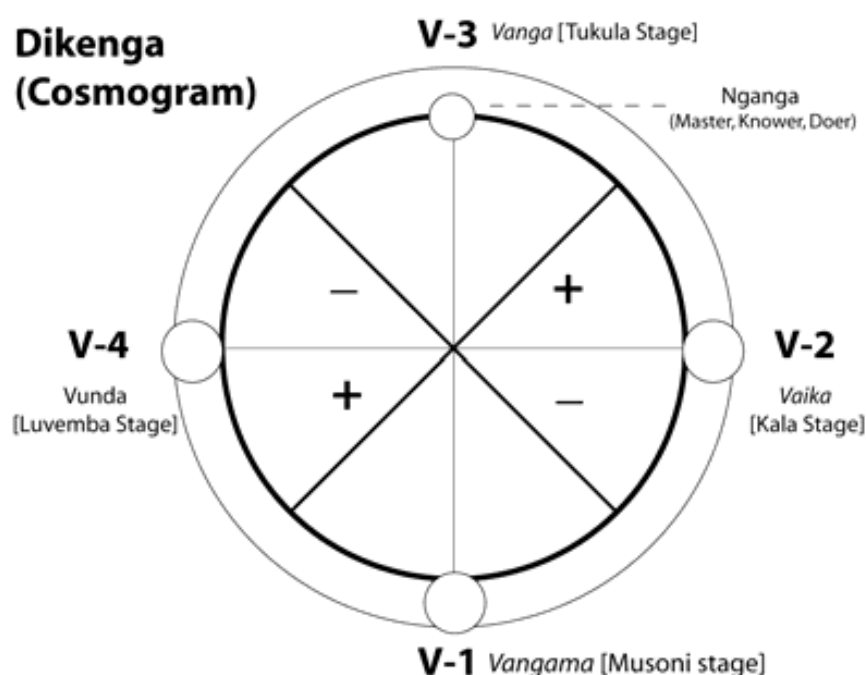


Fig. 4.2.7: Bantu-Kongo Cosmological Wheel (Imhotep, 2007: 23)

- The first “V” is called **Vangama**; it is the biological formation process stage (the womb).
- **V-2 is called Vaika**. This represents the actual existence stage (the birthing process) in which one becomes a breathing, sound-making [vovi] being.
- **V-3 is the most aspired “V” of any muntu**. It is the **Vanga** stage and is derived from the archaic word “ghanga,” which means to do or perform.
- **V-4** represents the greatest change of all, which is death. **Vunda** means to rest and this is where one enters the realm of living energy called the ancestral realm.



In this cosmological setting, a human being is an object in a conceptually radial constant motion in his/her upper and lower world. This conceptualisation of the cosmology is universally African and are comparatively similar to the Egyptian Akhet symbol and Maat practices in ancient Egypt (Kemet).

At the dawn of the universe, Maat was the food of the gods (Asante, 2007: 7). Maat in this instance is the goddess of the unalterable laws of heaven (Martin, 2008: 956); an interrelatedness order of righteousness, including the divine, natural and social (Karenga, 2004: 7). It is the basis for the creator of the universe's rules on how human being and human being; human being and nature and nature and nature should interact. Asante argues (2007) that, in the past 400 years, enslavement and colonisation have severely distorted the perception and perspective of African history. He observes that history is always about the ancestors, their lives, families, successes, behaviours, cultural institutions and deeds, political, economic and social (Asante, 2007: 1). The interpretation of the above in the built form is the essence in the architecture of a place.

True and honest reflection on these various facets of ancestral times in this universe can only be achieved if their voices are not muted and then projected by distorted, dishonest voiceovers. Reflecting an honest voice of any ancestry requires appreciation of the intricacies of the story and related sensitivities. Asante argues that three challenges arise in achieving this narrative with respect to the African story:

1. Lack of thematic centrality;
2. The distortion of African agency;
3. The lack of a clear vision.

The lack of thematic centrality refers to the historian's inability to place the subject at the core of all narrations, interpretations, and explanations when writing about Africa. The distortion of agency means that the historian gives agency to Europeans in an African context so that Africans become minors in their own stories. The lack of a clear vision means that the historian has introduced Eurocentric attitudes, behaviours, customs, and concepts into the discussion of African history to the detriment of a clear understanding of the motivations and desires of African people (Asante, 2007:1).

The African has to play a central role in the development of his life endeavours as part of the greater humanity. A role that puts him/her as a subject.... an agent of a human story. From the dawn of humanity, Africans have believed that the universe is composed of three elements: the sky, the earth and the world. The sky and earth constitute the world. Although each of these elements cannot exist in isolation from the others, many ethnic societies consider the sky to be supreme. It is regarded as the domain of the spirits, the living and the unborn as well as thunder, lightning, rain, drought, and other natural phenomena. The earth was the burial place of people and the site of their activities; agriculture, hunting, fishing, and government; among others. The world was the domain of all people, both ethnic and non-ethnic and, as such, embraced interethnic relationships: war, peace, trade, and so on (Ayittey, 2006: 35). Each of these three components was represented as either a force or a god.

This triad of components of the universe underpins most indigenous African societies' recognition of the hierarchical ordering of supernatural and cosmic forces. The sky god was supreme. This is supported by the first major African civilisation, the world that had a definitive impact on the direction of human culture – Kemet, later called Egypt by the Greeks. Kemet means “the land of the blacks” or “the black country” (Asante, 2007: 24). It occupies a special place in relation to other ancient civilisations in that it is the first instance of human beings organising themselves into a nation comprised of many different ethnic and social communities. This is therefore the first nation on earth, created and developed from the values of the African environment. While communities of people existed previously, including settlers on various farming lands, and pastoral groups moving from one place to another, the establishment of Egypt marked the first time in human history that a nation was born with many towns and villages brought under the control of a central government (Asante, 2007: *ibid*).

The single most important element that ensured the Kemet nation's longevity was commitment to religious and moral values and the single-mindedness with which this was implemented. In Kemet the people usually honoured gods in triads, such that in Waset the triad consisted of Amen, Mut, and Khonsu and at Men-nefer it was Ptah, Sekhmet, and Nefertem. This was the idea of the father, mother and child modelled after the original triad of Ausar, Auset, and Heru. However, a single supreme deity was always worshipped as the almighty god by the people of Kemet. This was most often

the male father figure. For example, at Waset the figure was Amen and at Men-nefer he was Ptah (Asante, 2007: 30).

No supreme deity was older than Ra, Atum or Ra-Atum, the deity of the university city of On, called Heliopolis by the Greeks, the City of the Sun. Ra was a sky god depicted in human form who was said to have created himself. He came forth out of the Nun, the primordial waters. The eight parts of his body which he brought into existence were grouped into four pairs of deities, two male and two female. They were Shu, the god of air, and Tefnut the goddess of moisture, the earth god Geb and the sky goddess NUT, Set and Nebhet, and Auser and Auset. This was called the *Doctrine of Heliopolis* (Asante, 2007: *ibid*).

Ayittey (2006) notes, that this cosmic fabric of the triad is replicated across societies on the African continent. The names of each god differed from one ethnic society to another. For example, among the Yoruba, the sky god was the *Olorun Oldumare*, the supreme god. He was the source of power of his subjects, the *orisa* of gods, who influenced relations between the sky and the world. The earth goddess was *Onile*, and the *Ogboni* was the earth cult. The principal organ of the *Orgboni* was the *Oyo Mesi* or council of state. Among the Asante, the supreme god was Onyame who could be referred to as the sky god, although he had terrestrial functions in providing protection to the people (Ayittey, 2006: 35).

There is a common thread across most African cultures, which reflects the cosmological context of human beings. The idea of a single supreme being who happens to be the creator of the universe is pervasive and central to this are lesser gods that are attributed to the basic triad elements already mentioned. This section merely cites examples of various cosmic or generally religious and moral systems across selected societies on the continent, but the idea would be to establish how they impact on built form. What would be of interest is to find parallels in the selected case study area.

The theme of the supremacy of the sky god cuts across most African societies. The same theme of the triad elements and a supreme god is found in West Africa. The omnipresent sky god *Naamwini* (literally “chief” of all supernatural beings) among

northern Ghana's Dagaaba is at the top of the cosmological hierarchy. Subordinate to this were a plethora of other supernatural beings (*mwime*) whose existence was manifested in or through natural phenomena such as hills (*nakotang*), rivers (*gyel*), and lightning (*saa*). Lower down was the *tengan*, "owner of the land," and last were ancestral spirits (*kpiime*) (ibid).

Among some inhabitants of East Africa such as the Nandi of Kenya, the supreme god was *Asis*, whose being was identified in the sun, *asista*. He regulated the balance between human beings and nature (Ayittey, 2006: ibid). According to Nandi society the cosmos operated in a strictly orderly manner and therefore all three elements had to be in perfect harmony – a state that is known as *kiet*. Any element that was out of balance would bring about chaos, disease, wars, drought, etc. The Arusha of Tanzania also believed that an individual's personality was the outcome of the interplay of natural forces (Ayittey, 2006: 36).

The amaNguni peoples occupy the southern part of the continent. AmaZulu and most amaNguni societies call the lord of the sky *iNkosi yaphezulu* or *iNkosi yezulu*. This literally, this means "the King" of the sky. AmaZulu belief systems consider the sky to be a blue rock that stretches from edge to edge of a flat surfaced earth. The earth is carried by the horns of four bulls. When one of the bulls shakes its head the earth follows suit and this accounts for earthquakes. The sun and moon follow defined paths but do not touch the sky as they both shine on earth.

Generally, it can be argued that Africans believed that their daily actions were controlled and observed by the cosmic spirits to the extent that sickness and death were similarly interpreted – hence, the frequent recourse to fetishes and cults to treat the ill (ibid). These supernatural forces were assumed to have emotional intelligence and a code of conduct that prohibited certain types of human behaviour. Compliance with these rules was rewarded with longevity, freedom from sickness, and individual prosperity. Violations were punished with sudden death, terrible disease, or financial ruin on an individual basis and collectively by poor harvests or drought. These rules or code of conduct, which formed the social norms handed down from generation to generation, were supervised and enforced by the ancestral spirits. The ancestors were assumed to have on-going concern for the safety, welfare, and progress of the living

members of the kin group. Therefore, fear of offending the ancestors established and reinforced the moral order (Ayittey, 2006: 36).

Consequently, it was vital for the living to communicate with these gods and spirits to ensure compliance with the moral code and avoid any displeasure that might be unintentionally invited by one's conduct. Every human activity on earth, such as economic affairs, marriage, and celebrations of any form, were heavily influenced by religion and compliance to the cosmic order. In agricultural communities working was prohibited on set days as a sign of respect and obedience to the sky and earth gods that brought forth the rains. Similarly, fishing communities observed set days in a week out of respect for the goddess of the water. Maintaining harmony and order among the three components of the universe or what Rapoport (1968) called the "cognized environment", was reserved for ritual leaders (kings and chiefs) or priests. The precise forms and methods varied from group to group.

At the end of colonial period, all African religions were monotheistic in the sense that they believed the world was created by a single God. They differed from Christianity and Islam in holding that the creator God was no longer in active charge – nor was he ever a moral force for good and evil; he simply set the stage and then retired into neutrality (Ayittey, 2006: 40).

The above discourse emphasises society. Where does individuality fit into the scheme of things? As in non-African societies, traditional African societies had a keen awareness of the how the environment influences people. Cooperation is the key to the success of a group. Naïve Europeans or Americans have sometimes thought that Africans cannot understand terms such as sister, mother, or son because they seemingly used the terms so loosely, when in fact, non-Africans fail to understand the African system (Vaughan in Ayittey, 2006: 42). The communal nature of African societies did not rule out individuality and the capability of enjoying personal success in one's own right. The individual's strength lay in cooperation of the larger group; as the saying goes in isiZulu: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. A human can only be human through other human beings. It is through a given community that one obtains the satisfaction of being a human being. Otherwise humanness becomes useless. Group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity, a humanistic orientation

and collective unity, among others, have been defined as the key social values of *ubuntu* (Ayittey, 2006: 43).

The manner in which the individual perceives themselves in the greater universe has an impact on how they relate to nature, built or natural. If there is an emphasis on the individual, the idea would be to conquer it whilst if the emphasis is on “we” there is a greater chance of working with nature.

Besides conceptualising culture as a way of life, it can be defined as “a way of coping with the ecological setting” (Mthethwa, 2011: 24). This definition implies the needs for correlation between one’s way of life and their ecological setting. At this juncture the study examines the concepts of African culture and identity.

#### 4.3 AFRICAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The identity of an African is tacitly a social perspective, with the group being more significant than the individual. The cosmology has a direct bearing on traditional African societies and individuals’ culture and identity. Certain institutions guide the individual on how to be and how to relate to fellow human beings and the natural environment (natural or, by extension, built). This section analyses selected institutions that derive from the cosmological orientation discussed above. It focuses on social identity, which is discussed later. For this reason, this section examines the following key institutions:

- Indigenous legal systems;
- Indigenous political systems;
- Indigenous systems of government; and
- Indigenous economic systems.

The existence of societies rests, in the main, on a set of principles and norms on how individuals relate to one another, the community, and the environment and that are applied to mediate problems that may arise within these relationships. A set of such

rules, codified or not, may be termed “law” and can be divided into four categories: natural, contractual, statutory, and customary laws (Ayittey, 2006: 67).

Nature constitutes the body of rules people must follow in order to live and work in peace (ibid). This involves avoiding bodily harm and destruction of property. It also requires respect for contractual agreements reached between parties and compensation for aggrieved ones. Contractual law is a set of binding rules and is only binding on those that signed the contract. Statutory laws are rules of conduct that are designed by government employees, legislated by parliament, and administered by a government official such as king, or a minister and enforced by the police controlled by a given official. Customary laws are not commands or legislated rules but are conventions and enforceable rules that have emerged and are respected spontaneously, without formal agreement, among people as they go about their daily business (Ayittey, 2006: 68).

Generally, customary law in traditional societies is a body of well-recognised rules of conducting affairs and is influenced by the lower levels of the triad of cosmic elements discussed in Section 4.2. An example is the Ga-Dangme society of Ghana that is part of the greater Kwa language family, where most of the rules that govern and influence individual behaviour have existed since time immemorial and apply to all members of the group. Common sense and notions of fairness were critical in the initial formulation of the rules of traditional law, but as they came to be applied as precedent by persons acting in a judicial capacity, they took on a legal character of their own. The major rules of traditional Ga-Dangme law cover the areas of nationality, land, chattels, marriage, testamentary disposition, defamation, and modes of enforcing payment of debt (Ayittey, 2006: 67).

Time immemorial embodies pre-colonial times. These customary legal systems determined how one would be part of the group.

In any society or family, there are bound to be disputes with regard to property rights and various mechanisms and institutions were devised to resolve them. Depending on the nature of the dispute or offence, African societies set up a hierarchy of courts: the moot, the family, the ward, and the chief’s and the king’s court (Ayittey, 2006: 70).

Resolution of disputes and conflicts is based on the cosmological emphasis on peace. Section 4.2 noted that Africans stressed the maintenance of peace, order and harmony in the universe which consisted of the sky, the earth and the world. Order and harmony in the universe also required the maintenance of corresponding conditions within various kinship groups in the ethnic society (Ayithey, 2006: 72). The Arusha of Tanzania placed great emphasis on settling any disputes through persuasion and by resort to established settlement procedures (Carlston, 1968:310). Similarly, the Tallensi of Ghana abhorred killing and violent resolution of conflicts to the extent of celebrating the *Golib* festival during which feuds and hostilities between clans were prohibited (Ayithey, 2006: 71).

Stateless societies resolved cases in a treaty-making process, akin to the moots of thirteenth century England where Anglo-Saxon communities settled their disputes by meeting outside, under the shade of a tree (Ayithey, 2006: 73). Understanding this type of a lifestyle is fundamental in designing built environments. These dispute resolution mechanisms persist in contemporary traditional African societies albeit with a tinge of European flair. Thus, in stateless societies, disputes were resolved informally rather than through specifically constituted legal bodies.

Despite the rise of national legal systems in Africa, indigenous modes of justice persist. In Iboland, disputants find indigenous law more accessible, satisfactory, and reliable in resolving most land disputes as well as domestic or civil cases (Uwazie, 1994 in Ayithey, 2006: 104).

The second factor that exerted considerable influence on African culture and identity was indigenous political institutions. The organisational structure of indigenous political systems was generally based on kinship, ancestry, and survival in much the same way as social organisations (Ayithey, 2006: 105). Each of the ethnic groups devised its own system of government, although there was much cross-ethnic pollination. The day-to-day governance of societies was influenced by customs and traditions with no written constitution. There was thus diversity amongst traditional political systems although there were commonalities due to cross-pollination and belief systems that stemmed from the cosmological outlook discussed in section 4.2.



Ayittey (2006) classifies political organisations within traditional societies into two groups, although variations can be identified between different societies.

- Group A: societies with centralised authority (chiefs), administrative machinery, and judicial institutions – chiefdoms or states. Ethnic groups with such central figures included the Fanti of Ghana, the Yoruba of Nigeria, the Mossi of Burkina Faso, and the Swazi and Zulu of southern Africa (Ayittey, 2006: 106).
- Group B: chiefdoms that grew so powerful that they absorbed others to form kingdoms and empires (Ayittey, 2006: 109).

In both groups there were two variants (Table 4.3.1):

GROUP A		GROUP B
Independent Rule		Empires
Stateless societies (without Chiefs)		“Assimilation” (ruled by Kings)
Kingdoms or states (ruled by Chiefs)		Indirect rule (ruled by Kings)

**Table 4.3.1: General types of traditional African political structures  
(Adopted from Ayittey, 2006: 110)**

The basis of membership of a social group was fluid in all forms or variants of political organisations in both groups. This enabled groups or individuals to move out of a Chieftainship/Kingdom in search of new territory either by forming a new grouping or moving to an existing group that offered perceived benefits. Such movement could have been triggered by depletion of resources or natural disasters such as drought and floods or misrule that brought about instability in larger societies. In some instances, movement were due to hunger for power – the desire to control or seek implementation of progressive ideas. In such instances, this would start as a village that grew into a chieftaincy/kingdom either by coercion or voluntary association. In most traditional African societies, political organisation began at the lineage or village

level. When migrating families formed a village, the original founder became the *odenkuro* (owner of the village) in the case of the Ashanti and *samusha* in the case of the Shona (Ayiittey, 2006: 110).

In principle, the African chiefdom had a political structure composed of four basic units of governance:

- The chief – central authority
- The inner or Privy Council – The Chief's advisors
- Council of elders – drawn from village lineages
- The village Assembly – drawn from amongst the commoners

(Ayiittey, 2006: 111)

Power resided with the Assembly of commoners, thus giving the phrase 'people power' real meaning. In most African villages, commoners could freely form their own associations: political, economic, and social, giving credence to freedom of association (Ayiittey, 2006: 112).

This social stratification or political organisation was and still is critical when it comes to how it impacts on built form. The positioning of the chief or King's residence within the settlement stems from this.

In accordance with traditional ideals, a chief would never force his subjects to act against their conscience; hence the isiNguni saying: *Inkosi yinkosi ngabantu*. One is a chief or king only through the express wishes of one's people. This draws on the earlier discussion of "we" and "I" – with African societies putting emphasis on society rather than individuality.

Consequently, the chief's duties are bound by the following tenets/oath:

- Serving his people;
- Seeking advice from his people;
- Following the customs and traditions of his people, and
- Ruling with their express wishes and consent.

The second and the third points of the oath are closely tied to the African cosmological triad discussed in Section 4.2 (pp. 133). Ultimately, the chief had to ensure that his people were happy with his rule or else his subjects would relieve him of his duties or simply move elsewhere. The king would need people to protect him from his rivals and this acted as a check against any excesses of power.

In most African societies, chieftaincy or kingship was sacred and was the link between the ancestors and the living. As discussed in section 4.2, good behaviour was rewarded and bad behaviour was punished by the ancestors. The chief would therefore rule his people in such a manner as to please the ancestral spirits. This belief was strong across the continent such that the Limba of Sierra Leone did not believe in killing their chiefs in the belief that the ancestors would do it for them (Ayiittey, 2006: 161). Where ancestral vengeance did not work, the people would simply revolt – an action known amongst the Yoruba of Nigeria as *kirikiri*; *itwila* among the Gikuyu of Kenya and *adom ye* among the Akan of Ghana (Ayiittey, 2006: 175).

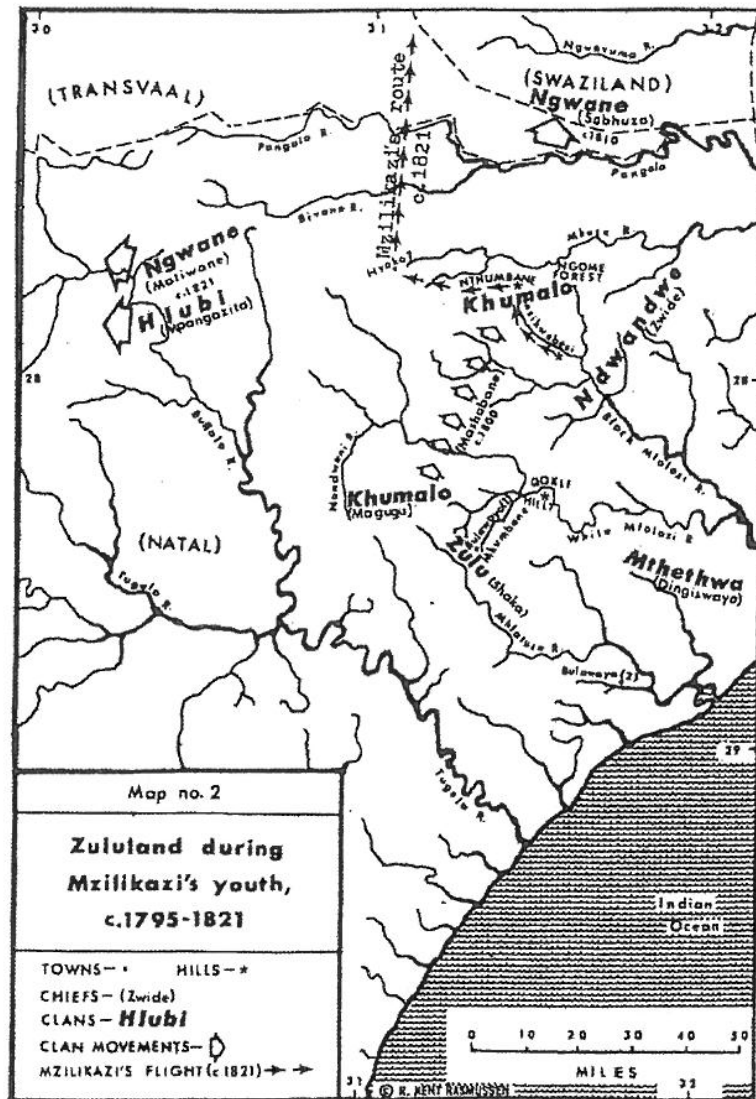
The natural progression was village, provinces and finally, the kingdom. In Africa, kingdoms have been characterised by “divine kingships” – a concept based on the fact that the king was the embodiment of the kingdom and there was a mystical union between the two (Ayiittey, 2006: 185).

At the onset of colonialism, a large spectrum of societal political organisations was at play across the African continent, varying from the stateless through chieftainships to kingdoms and empires. Governments in traditional African empires arose from two types of processes, assimilation and indirect rule. One example from each of these categories is briefly discussed:

- The Zulu Kingdom: due to its link to the kingdom that was to be established on the contemporary Zimbabwean Highveld – the location of case study (the AmaNdebele Kingdom under King Mzilikazi) at the onset of colonialism, and
- The Oyo Empire (Yoruba of Nigeria). Only the structure will be discussed.

The Zulu Kingdom of south-eastern South Africa was unique in African history in that it devised a political system as a direct response to an environmental crisis (Ayiittey,

2006: 199). This was an expansionist, assimilationist approach to empire building that had far reaching consequences for the sub-region.



The rise of Shaka Zulu to the highest authority among the Zulu was one of the most fateful moments in African history. Born in 1787 out of wedlock, Shaka was the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi (Asante, 2007: 191). He grew up under King Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa Kingdom under whom he was launched into a military career that would see him rise to the apex of empire builders of the time. In the second decade of the nineteenth century,

Fig. 4.3.1: Kingdoms and Confederacies before the onset of Mfecane (Rasmussen, 1978: 11)

Zwide emerged as one of the most powerful rulers in the eastern regions of Southern Africa in what is now called KwaZulu-Natal (Fig. 4.3.1).

The others were Sobhuza of the Ngwane and Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa. Zwide drove Sobhuza north of the Pongola River, where the latter founded the modern Swazi kingdom. He then advanced against Dingiswayo who was captured and killed by the Ndwandwe. However, before his Mthethwa confederation could disintegrate, it was taken over and rebuilt by a subordinate chief. This was Shaka of the Zulu clan (Rasmussen, 1978: 12 – 13, Groenewald, 2014).

These events are generally agreed to have taken place in around 1816 (Asante, 2007: 190 - 201; Ayittey, 2006: 199 – 201; Rasmussen, 1978: 12 - 13). The reason for examining the Zulu kingdom is to understand how it was structured and how it fits into the structure discussed in Table 4.3.1. The conquest of Zwide's Ndwandwe led to a series of wars known as the Mfecane or Difaqane that saw the emergence of the Zulu kingdom (Oliver and Atmore, 1972: 55). Some chiefs were annihilated and dispersed, but those that survived were incorporated into the Zulu kingdom and assimilated (Ayittey, 2006: 200). Shaka's success in building the Zulu nation rested on military prowess in combination with the assimilation of conquered chiefdoms and delegation of powers to those on the periphery of the kingdom. Although ultimately subject to Shaka, heads of pre-existing chiefdoms retained a degree of autonomy. Some were allocated land and cattle by Shaka to ensure their loyalty. Shaka entrusted key advisory and executive roles to senior members of the ruling lineage, both men and women, and appointed a larger number of *izinduna*, state officials who performed administrative functions (Maylam in Ayittey, 2006: 200).

Statehood was fostered through the adoption of Zulu culture and observance of national ceremonies. The Zulu king was vested with strong authority and his kingdom was structured around two integrated basic principles:

- A social power base: organised around homesteads (*umuzi/imizi*) which were production units headed by clan/kinship heads, and
- State power: organised from above, military structures were used to collect the surplus (ibid).

The King ruled with *izikhulu* – the great ones – of the kingdom. Together with *izikhulu*, he comprised the *ibandla* (Ayittey, 2006: 201) which was the highest council in the state. Membership of the *izikhulu* was primarily determined by birth (lineage association) as in other African chiefdoms, but political acumen was also a factor (ibid).

State power devolved from the king to *izikhulu*, to the heads of the administrative areas within the kingdom, with local affairs being the responsibility of resident homestead heads (*abamnumzana/umnumzana*) (ibid).

Whilst the imperial Zulu Kingdom's constitutional structure was built on assimilation or incorporation of conquered ethnic groups into Zulu culture that of the Oyo (Yoruba) Kingdom was based on indirect rule. The political structure of the Yoruba Kingdom in the eighteenth century when it was in its heyday resembled that of the Asante (Ghana) and Zande Kingdoms (Central African Republic). Its development also bore close resemblance to that of the Zulu Kingdom, suggesting strong similarities in the constitution of African kingdoms (Ayittey, 2006: 243).

Yoruba oral history relates that, the founder of the Oyo Empire, Oduduwa, settled in Ile-Ife around the fourteenth century. Before his arrival, there were around 13 semi-autonomous settlements that Oduduwa sort to subjugate after settling amongst them. The ensuing organised resistance by the indigenous settlements led to a stalemate and ultimate peace settlement around the middle of the fourteenth century. As in the Mfecane wars and the ultimate rise of the Zulu Kingdom, drought and population increase led to the restructuring of the Ile-Ife centred kingdom. In contrast to the Zulu Kingdom that took an expansionist route by conquering peripheral chiefdoms, assimilating them and centralising resources, the Yoruba kingship opted for migration after a meeting was held in Ita Ijero (place of deliberations) (Ayittey, 2006: 243). The dispersal of Oduduwa princes led to the formation of 15 kingdoms that were designed around the Ile-Ife model with an agreed working relationship.

The Yoruba King who was called the Oba was the supreme leader and was stationed in the town (ilu) that was the capital of the Kingdom. The king's powers were kept in check by the council of chiefs called the Iwarefa. The supreme king was the Alafin (Alaafin) at Oyo (Ayittey, 2006: 246). Like in the Zulu Kingdom, where the king was powerless without izikhulu, so was the Alafin without the Iwarefa. The Zulu imperial kingdom was a centralised system whilst that of the Oyo was a confederation of smaller autonomous kingdoms, all of which traced their ancestry back to Oduduwa.

The last, but not least, factor that contributes to an individual African's culture and identity is the indigenous economic system. Human beings have an insatiable appetite for wants that range from houses, to food, TVs, clothes, cars, etc. What a person wears, eats, lives in, drives, etc., ultimately creates their identity and is driven by lifestyles (culture). However, resources to produce these goods are limited. From an

economist's point of view there are four factors of production: labour, capital, land and entrepreneurs. Economic problems arise when scarce resources have to be allocated to numerous wants.

The basic economic questions are:

1. What to produce?
2. How much?
3. For whom?

In most precolonial African societies, agriculture was the primary economic activity and the basic unit of production was the extended family. Each family constituted a working unit or labour force and acted as an operative economic entity that produced goods together and shared the fruits of their labour as they saw fit (Ayittey, 2006: 318). This was a private effort by extended families with no interference and duties were delegated on the basis of gender and age. No family could produce all their requirements or wants, necessitating the production of a surplus for exchange for other goods. Crop production was not driven by tradition but by market demand. Pre-colonial African law and custom shared the following features with the free market system:

- Assets such as stock, crops, huts, handicrafts and weapons were privately owned and land was privately allotted and subject to private grazing rights;
- There were no laws against free contract and voluntary exchange;
- There were no coercive redistribution of wealth and almost no taxes;
- Chiefs and headmen had few autocratic powers and usually needed to obtain full consensus for decisions;
- Central government was limited, with a high degree of devolution to village councils, and there was no central planning structure;
- There were no powers of arbitrary expropriation, and land and huts could only be expropriated under extreme conditions after a full public hearing.

(Ayittey, 2006: 403)

Most of these conditions also applied to stateless societies across Africa. However, the political structure of stateless societies was different from that of various states across the continent. Africa's most distinctive contribution to human history has been the civilised art of living reasonably peacefully without a state (Jean-Francois Bayart in Ayittey, 2006: 112).

A common Western belief is that statelessness is synonymous with tyranny. Postcolonial developments in Africa attest to the falsehood of this belief. States that moved away from centralised control through chiefs include the Igbo of Nigeria, the Tallensi of Ghana and Mbeere of Kenya, amongst others. The stateless system relied on internal regulation. This became the basis for distinguishing between power (defined as the ability to influence events in a desired manner and direction) and authority (the acknowledged or recognised right to exercise power). One did not necessarily flow from the other (Ayittey, 2006: 115). Consequently, in stateless societies, hereditary did not play a prominent role in the delegation of authority to someone like a headman. Hereditary was one of the qualities taken into account and the person selected as a headman had to have proven leadership qualities such as oratory skills.

Precolonial African culture and identity were thus defined under the conditions described in this section, with the political structure and economic institutions being key factors.

The brief description of the Zulu and Yoruba Kingdoms applies to settlements with similar cosmological, political and economic conditions. The discussion thus far sets the scene for how the African identity was reflected in built form – a subject of the following section and increased graphics from hereon. The following section discusses selected precolonial settlements underpinned by the cosmological African culture and identity.

#### 4.4 SPACE AND ARCHITECTURE IN PRECOLONIAL AFRICA

The history of Africa is intertwined with its geography. Throughout time, the configuration of its rivers, lakes, deserts, Sahel, savannah, swamps, rainforests, plateaus, and mountains, rivers, and lakes has created the natural resources, plants, and animals that enabled humans to survive in the distant past and to proliferate in the past two millennia (Collins and Burns, 2007: 21). Pre-colonial settlements are examined in order to affirm that, regardless of how much the African has taken from



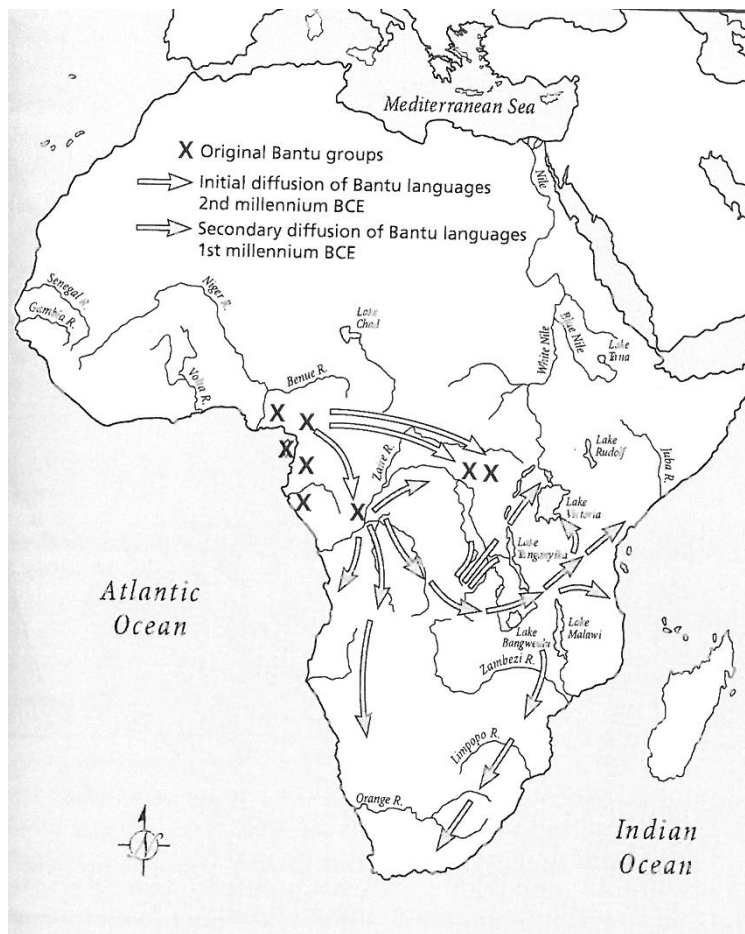
outside, at different times and places, their borrowings – whether techniques or beliefs – have always undergone adaptation, through the environment and circumstances, into societies, cultures and civilisations which became specifically and uniquely African (Davidson, 1987: 13 – 14).

The successes and failures of African developments can be traced to the same complex and interesting source: the interplay between people and their environment (Collins and Burns, 2007: 7 – 22; Davidson, 1984: 12). The wars that surrounded the formation of kingdoms and chiefdoms described in the previous sub-section can be traced to the relationship between human beings and the environment and natural resources. Like people in other regions of the world, Africans' lifestyles were influenced by the demands and parameters set by their environment whether it was the savannah, rainforests or deserts. The need to control resources and the means of production alluded to earlier led to stratification of societies and sharing of the landmass and hence the formation of settlements as independent units or under centralised institutions. This section examines the forces behind the formation of settlements with specific emphasis on the cosmological orientation and African culture and identity with respect to the indigenous institutions discussed earlier.

This discussion is bound by the common thread of cosmology, African culture and identity discussed earlier, with various examples highlighted to emphasise a point. The focus is examples from south of the Sahara although, where necessary, some will be from other parts of Africa.

Besides the factors discussed above that formed the basis for the selection of settlements, the argument is developed around the Bantu peoples that inhabit the case study area. Although languages can change rapidly, the core structure changes very slowly and is the most inflexible aspect of human culture and hence the key to the classification of humankind's linguistic relationships across the world (Collins and Burns, 2007: 44). All Bantu speakers, who comprise over 400 ethnic groups, use the root *ntu* for the word man, the plural of which is *ba*; hence the name *bantu* for all these languages with a common ancestor (Collins and Burns, 2007: 47). Four main languages are spoken by African peoples: Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Khoisan (Collins and Burns, 2007: 44). The Bantu are part of the Benue-Congo which is in turn the largest sub-branch of the Niger-Congo (See Fig. 4.4.1). As

discussed earlier, the commonalities of the languages suggest a common ancestry and therefore a common cosmological system.



**Fig. 4.4.1: Bantu Migration (Collins and Burns, 2007: 49)**

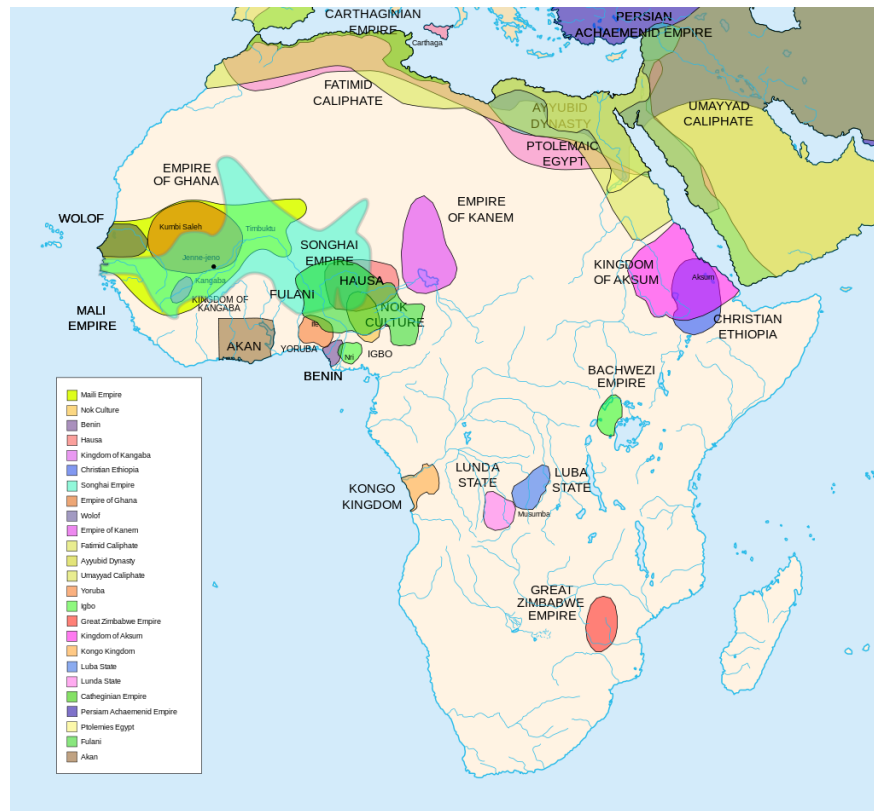
African settlements were driven by the concept of group rather than individual survival; hence the emphasis on “we” over “I”. The collectiveness of societies was the driver of settlement formation; this is explained later. Bantu migration was a critical movement of people in African history that began in the second millennium BC and spread from Cameroon eastward to the Great Lakes Region. In the first millennium BC, Bantu peoples spread from the Great Lakes to southern and east Africa.

These migration patterns saw Bantu speakers pushing westward to the savannahs of present-day Angola and eastward into Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe in the first century BC (Iliffe, 2007: 35; Blench, 1995: 128 - 132) with others moving eastwards into present day Tanzania and Kenya. Further migrations saw the two groups meeting and moving southwards into present-day Mozambique and south eastern South Africa in and around Maputo and Durban at around 1<sup>st</sup> BC. Sorghum, a major Bantu crop, could not thrive in the winter rainfall of Namibia and the Western Cape. Khoisan people inhabited the remaining parts of southern Africa (ibid).

In their southward movements, Bantu peoples practised animal husbandry and shifting agriculture. Not until the late first century millennium AD did they begin to return to their former village sites after long fallow periods, indicating that agricultural

colonisation of eastern and southern Africa was giving way to more settled communities (Iliffe: 2007: 36). The underlying influences of these settlements are discussed here on the basis of cosmology, African culture and identity. Since the section is about built forms, it concurrently analyses architecture and settlement planning. Furthermore, since the study focuses on Afrocentric sources that can be used as design generators in the development of an appropriate identity for civic spaces, some discussion on architecture and settlements planning is ideas based with no specific graphics.

Early farming communities were relatively homogeneous in outlook without any central authority that differentiated the leader, the village ruler, or territorial chief. As communities experienced changes in technology, agriculture, commerce, climate, demography, or some combination thereof, new and more permanent institutions emerged to more effectively coordinate the planting and harvesting of crops, mobilisation of resources, and adjudication of disputes between increasingly diverse social groups (Collins and Burns, 2007: 131).



**Fig. 4.4.2. Pre-colonial African States** (Source: By Jeff Israel (ZyMOS) - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2660560>)

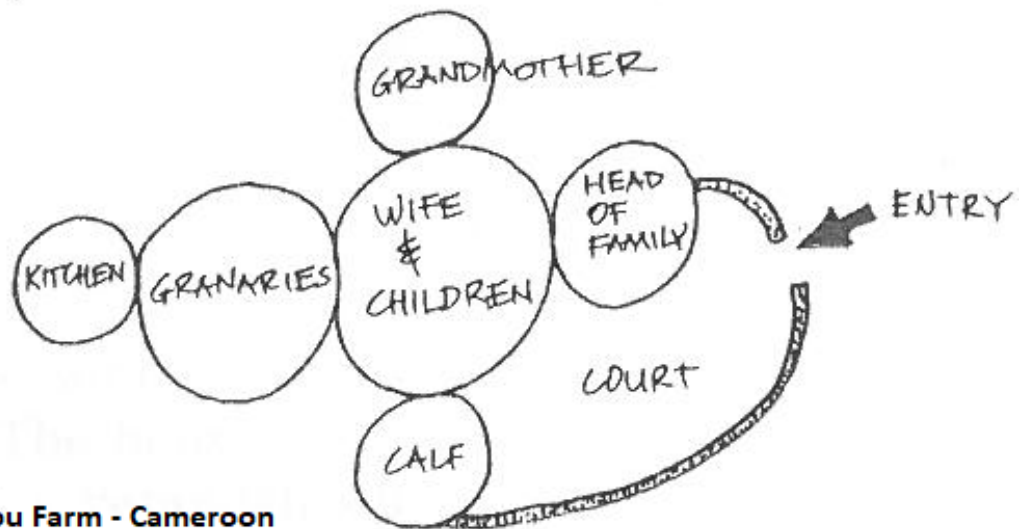
These developments manifested in the investment of authority in elders or prominent families. The second millennium saw the emergence of petty principalities with acknowledged leadership amongst the Yoruba, Edo, Nupe and Jukun peoples (ibid) (Fig. 4.4.2).

#### **4.4.1 Selected West African traditional civic spaces in context**

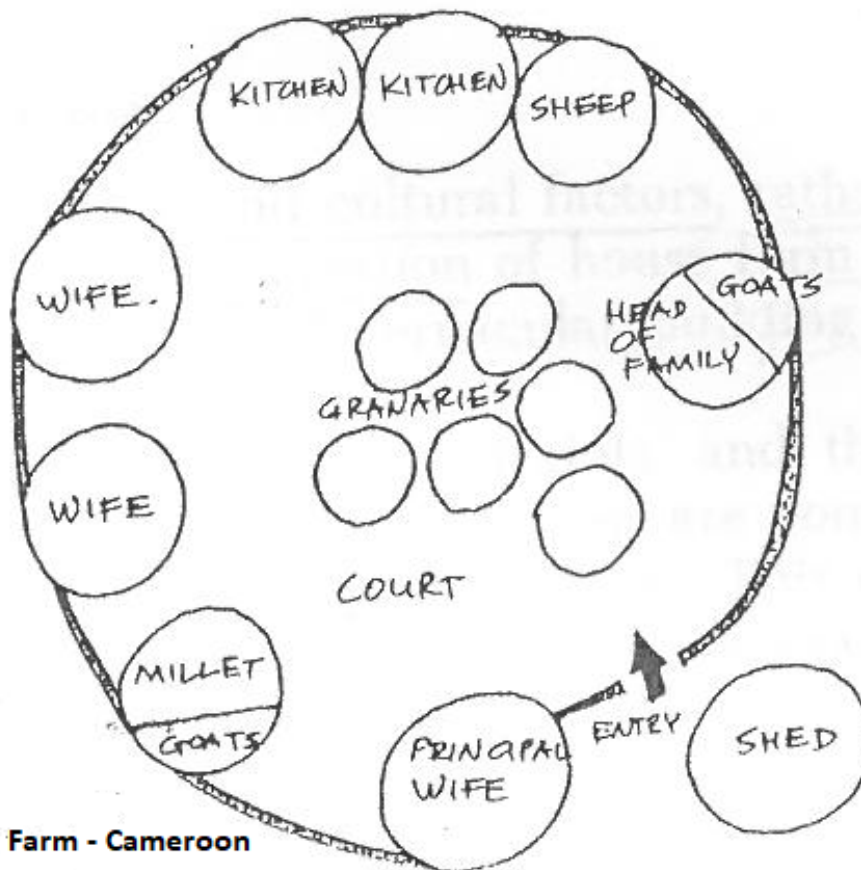
The focus here is why people build and how. All societies around the sub-Saharan African region had one common feature, that of kinship being reflected in settlement patterns. This was usually expressed by means of physical nearness; all members of one clan would live in a clearly defined territory (Denyer, 1978: 18). Within the settlement were villages occupied by a number of families whose size varied across the region determined by population size and centrality of power. Some villages were conceptually connected by kinship to the point that early European settlers could not understand how land was occupied. Early colonial officers in Buganda reported that there were no villagers, only scattered homesteads (Denyer, 1978: 19). This perception was a Eurocentric one which views land as a private commodity rather than communal, and as only physical rather than physical, spiritual and conceptual. The morphology of most of these villages was quite formal and some used symmetry as a spatial arrangement tool. Sub-Saharan Africa is replete with various forms of traditional architecture that can be classified into two main groups:

- (a) Organic: with circular plan forms predominating;
- (b) Linear: dominated by rectangular plan forms.

The homestead layout exhibited family relationships. Family requirements were simple and similar in all postcolonial sub-Saharan African societies: a place for each member to sleep; a place for cooking; places for food storage; and somewhere to protect domestic animals such as cattle, goats, and chickens at night; places to eat; and places to sit and talk in the day and practise craftwork, basket making, spinning and weaving. House form is influenced by the following factors: basic needs, family, women's position in the social structure, and the need for privacy and social intercourse (Rapoport, 1969: 61- 69). All these factors are derivatives of socio-cultural dynamics.



**Mofou Farm - Cameroon**  
**Monogamous**



**Moundang Farm - Cameroon**  
**Polygamous**

Fig. 4.4.3: Comparison of Cameroon houses and position of court with conceptual relational functions and spaces, both drawn to the same scale (Rapoport, 1969: 56)

Pre-colonial lifestyles were influenced by different ecological factors from those of contemporary times. In a traditional African house in polygamous situations, the man has no real house and visits his wives, each of whom has her own house, on different days (Rapoport, 1969: 56). The impact on built form is very different when one compares monogamous and polygamous relationships (Fig. 4.4.3).

Among the factors identified by Rapoport (1969), social intercourse best suits the manner in which civic spaces are perceived. Human beings are social animals; it is thus critical to look at how they socialise and how their social activities impact on built form. People meet to socialise in various places, including the house, the café, the public baths, or the street. Orientation is the key when it comes to socialisation, especially in big cities and villages and even in a jungle. Once orientation has been achieved, the question is when and how to meet and engage in social intercourse.

Social gathering spaces are evident in most African settlements, ranging from families through to communities. These are reflected in houses through to palaces. Outdoor communal spaces usually take the form of courtyards (Fig. 4.4.3). Indeed, these are civic spaces at family level. One can draw lessons from the positioning of these “civic” spaces relative to the “buildings” around them.

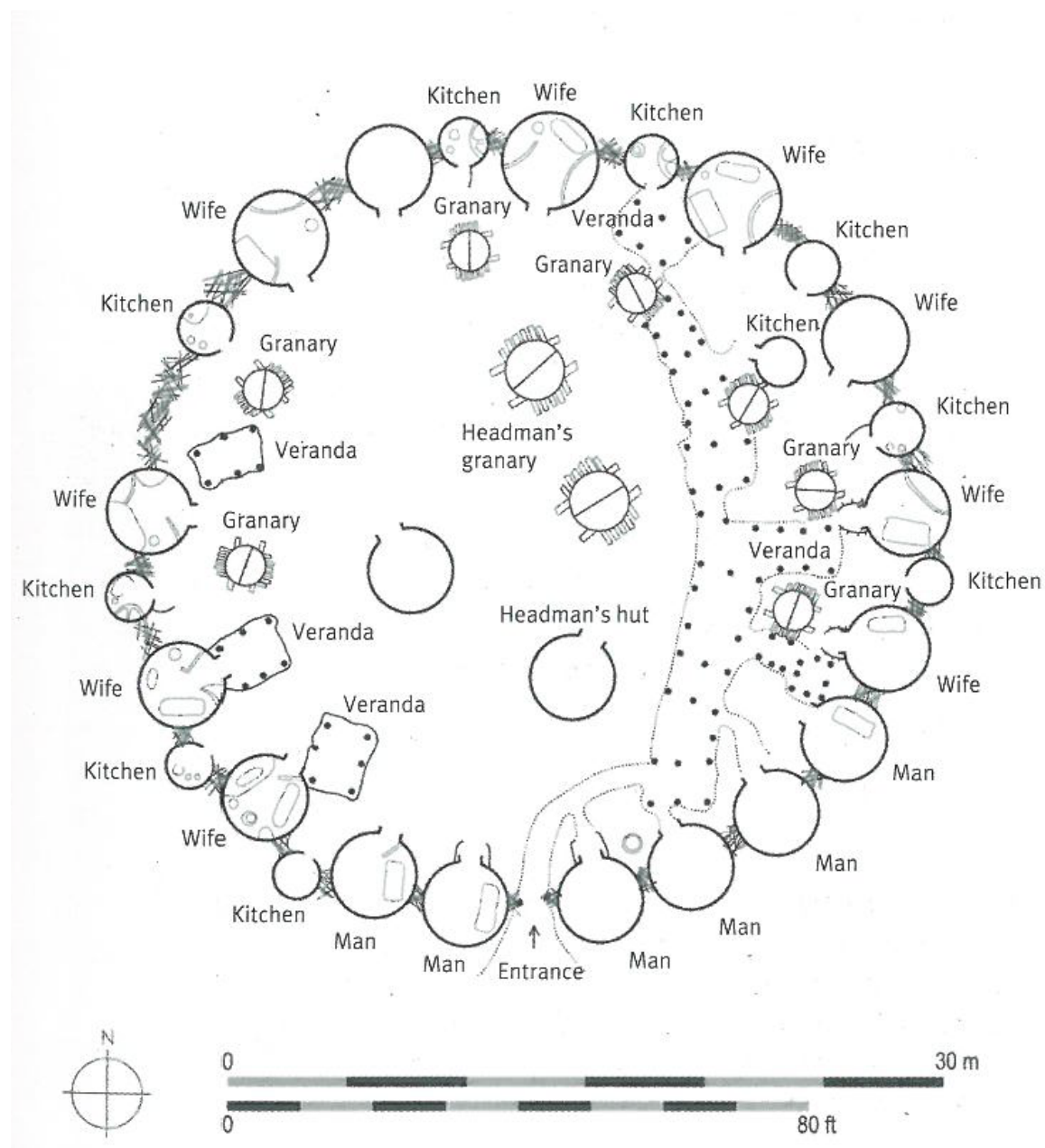
Siting of settlements has generally been influenced by:

- availability of water (good rains)
- religion and culture
- fertile land
- natural resources (building materials and minerals)
- shelter (from harsh weather)
- security
- availability of land
- good communications
- trading opportunities
- land administration

(Andersen, 1977: 11; Mumford, 1966)

As an urban vessel for their complex, polygamous, cattle-herding social organisation, many tribes in sub-Saharan Africa arranged their villages in circular fashion with the

centre used for the military parade and/or grazing/overnight shelter for domestic animals.



**Fig. 4.4.4: Plan of the Fali tribe compound in Northern Cameroon (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 277)**

The Fali tribe of northern Cameroon, for example, generally began with cylindrical structures with adobe walls and thatched roofs, which formed walled compounds that included kitchens, sleeping quarters, and granaries. In some cases, these compounds were linked together to form a larger, roughly circular farm enclosure, in which there were granaries and pens for the head of the family's livestock (Fig. 4.4.4).



In the complex, spatially-based cosmic symbolism of the Fali, the granaries are the most important buildings. Historian of Urbanism Erico Guidoni states that, “as places where edible seeds are stored, they represent the ark that descended from the sky in the mystic age and contained, among other things, all the vegetable species” (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 277). The granary’s mystical nature is marked with direct handprints (Plate 4.4.1). No composition is more classical than this one, with its bottom, middle and top comparable to the base, shaft and capital of the classical column (*ibid*). The granary raises a very important aspect of African cosmology, discussed earlier, as well as symbolism. The position of granaries also plays a significant role with respect to the position of women in most African societies and is thus reflected in built forms as a feminine element. How can this play a role in contemporary civic spaces, especially considering its symbolic significance?



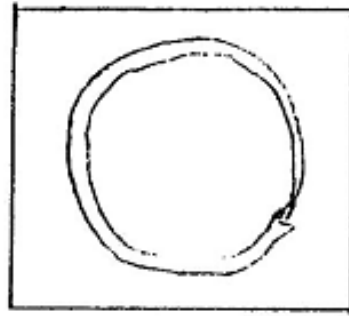
**Plate 4.4.1: Cylindrical granary, Yenegandougou, Ivory Coast**

Having said this, it is not uncommon to find a synthesis of organic and rectilinear characteristics in a house group or settlement. Among these dwelling types are the cylindrical, adobe tower houses of the Batammariba tribe in Northern Togo, which has been added to the United Nations’ list of World Heritage Sites (Fig. 4.4.1) (Fazio, Moffett and Wodehouse, 2014: 275). Cosmology and symbolism issues are central in Batammariba built form.

The cosmology of the Batammariba symbolises the continuity of human beings through a snake gobbling its tail. This is a symbol of perpetuity and stability. Batammariba architectural concepts are inspired by the circular form (Fig. 4.4.5.) represented by this symbol (Yavo, 2013: 49).



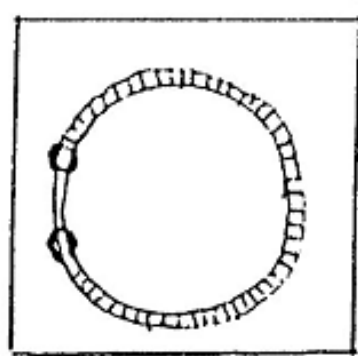
A snake devouring its  
tail  
**Infinity Principle**



**A**



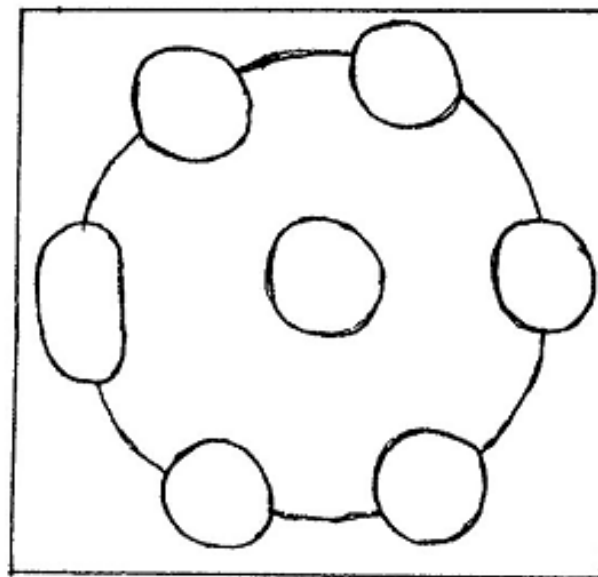
The room  
**Unit of infinity principle**



**B**



The Batammariba  
House  
**Units of infinity  
principle**



**C**

Fig. 4.4.5 – The Batammariba organic forms informed by cosmological and symbolic influences (Yavo, 2013: 50)

In most traditional settlements, built form is a reflection of kinship, and social groupings and affiliations and the Batammariba settlements are no exception. There are six types of two-storey houses amongst the Batammariba in Togo and Benin, namely, *Berba*, *Beyanbe*, *Osori*, *Otammari*, *Otchaou* and *Tayaba* scattered over Batammaribaland within the 12 villages (Yavo, 2013: 99). It is worth considering the Berba tatas, which are not as common as the Otammari house type, that reveal how past historical settlements are handled in Batammaribaland. This connects history to the contemporary way of life – an issue also discussed in relation to the Sydney Opera House in Australia, and symbolism issues.

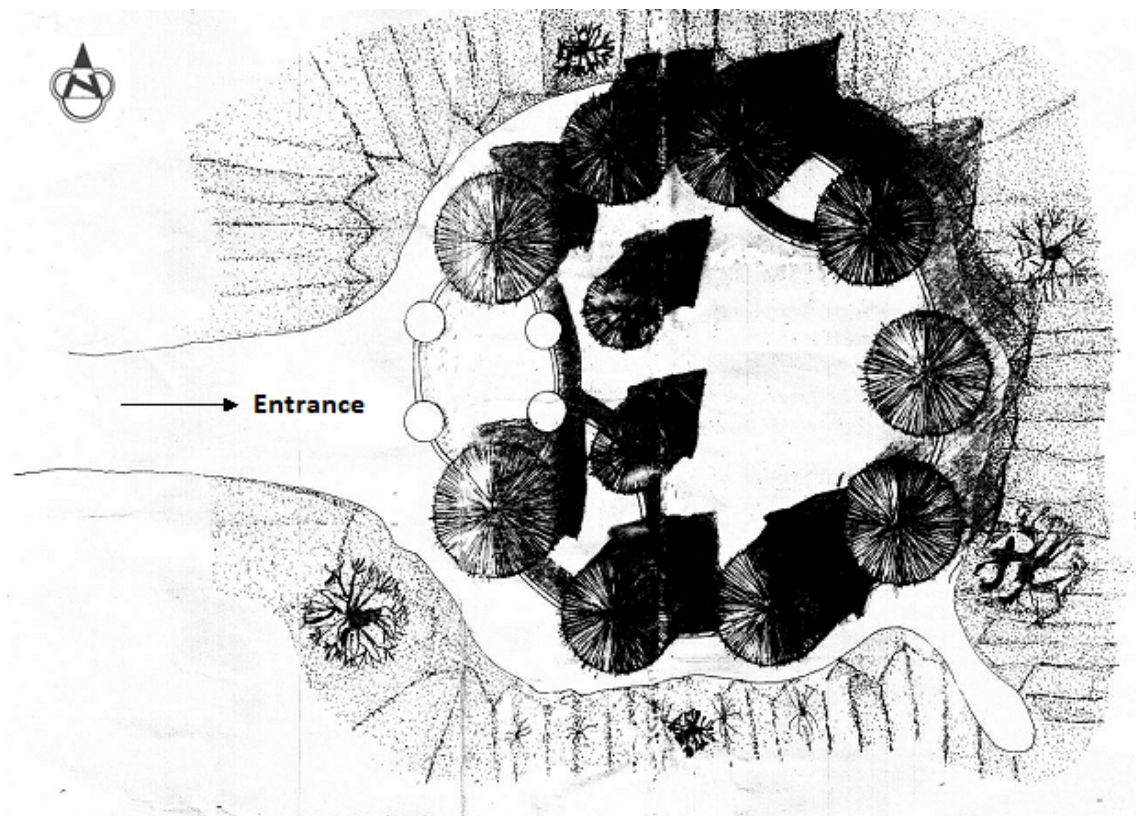
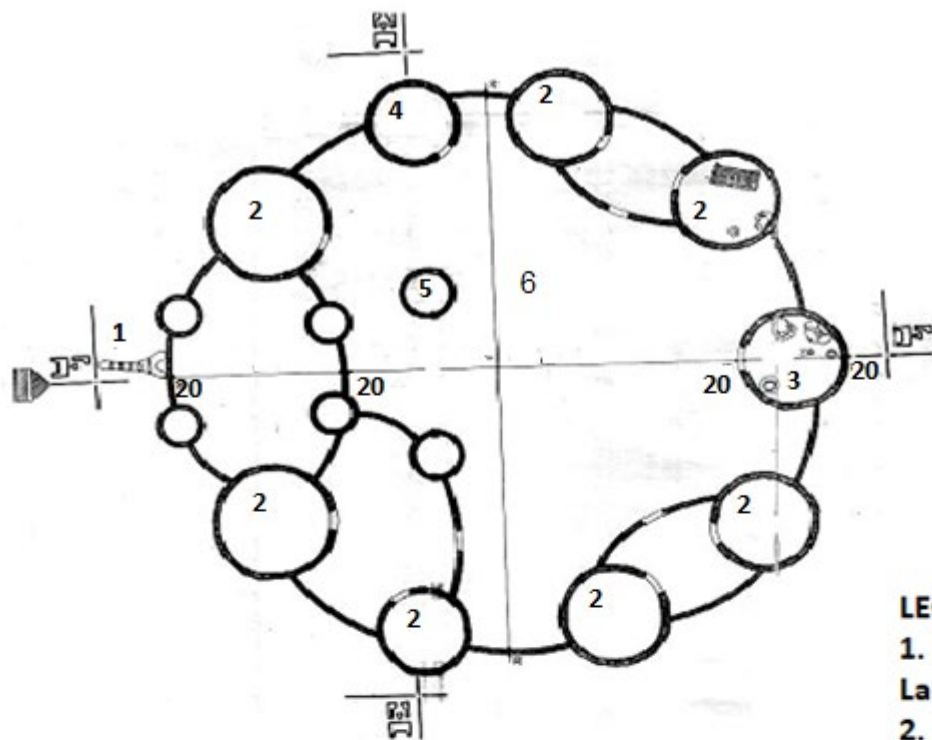


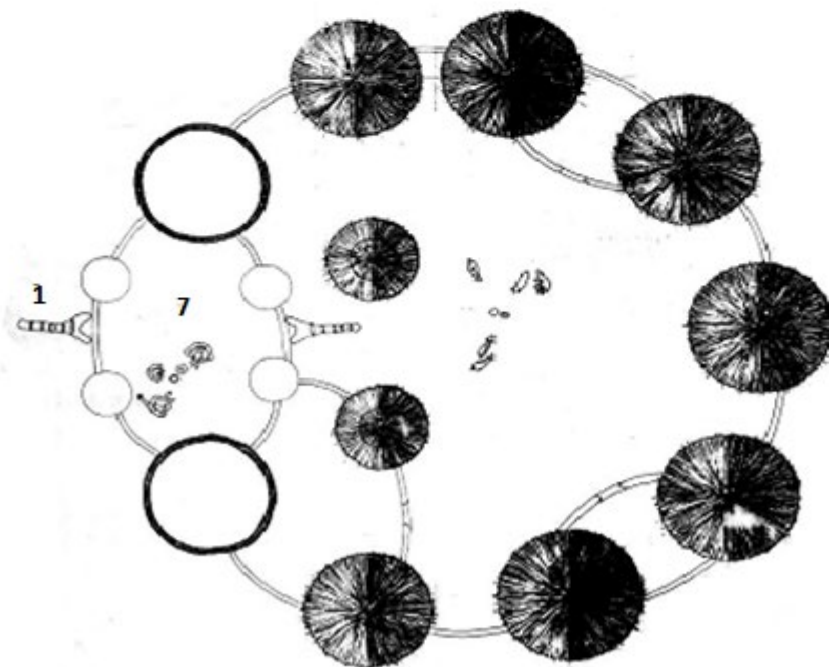
Fig. 4.4.6: Site Plan (Yavo, 2013: 102)

Whenever possible, Berba tatas (Fig. 4.4.6 – 4.4.12) are located on sites that have already been consecrated by previous human dwellings. Consecration is evident in the existence of conical ancestral shrines (Yavo, 2013: 101). In case of consecration, a new shrine is added before construction of the new compound begins as part of the ritual.



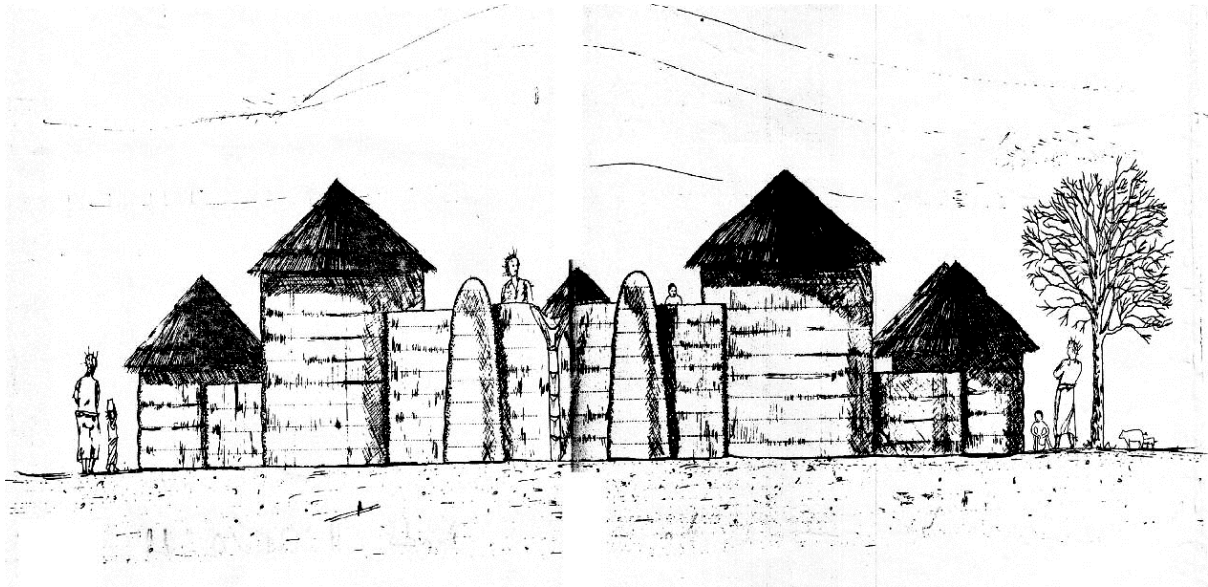
**Ground Floor Plan**

- LEGEND**
- 1. Main Entrance Ladder
  - 2. Bedrooms
  - 3. Kitchen
  - 4. Storeroom
  - 5. Granary
  - 6. Main Terrace
  - 7. Vestibule



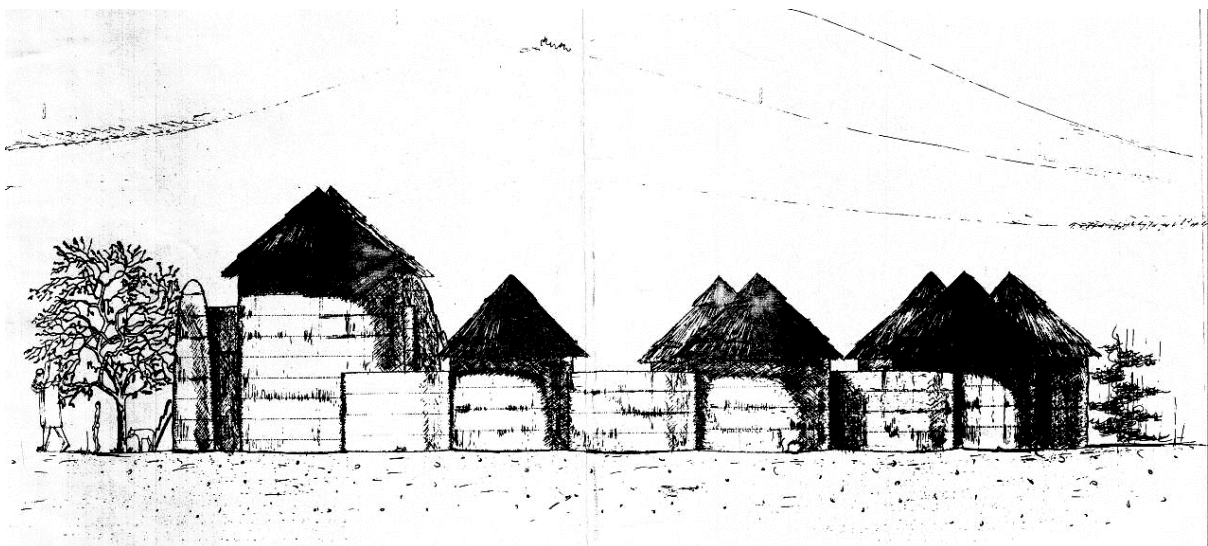
**Upper Floor Plan**

Fig. 4.4.7: Berba house type showing an organic morphology (Yavo, 2013: 103)



**Fig. 4.4.8: West Elevation (Yavo, 2013: 104)**

The circular walls are built incrementally as the lower levels become dry and waterproof, with the conical thatched roofs lashed to a radial framework of rafters. All the rooms are thatched except the millet-grinding room, which has a domelike mud roof supported by horizontal wooden beams. The mud roof is a rounded extension of a bullet-shaped enclosure (ibid).



**Fig. 4.4.9: South Elevation (Yavo, 2013: 104)**

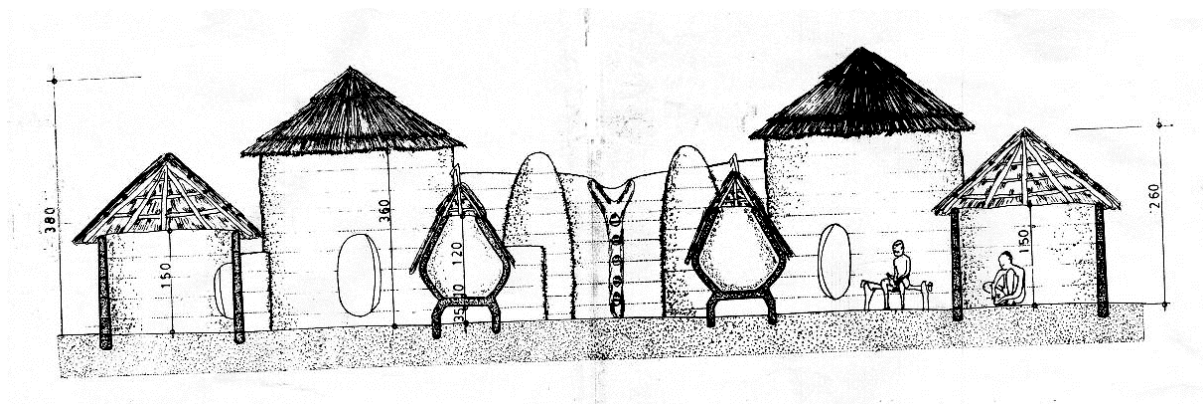


Fig. 4.4.10- Section E - E (Yavo, 2013: 105)

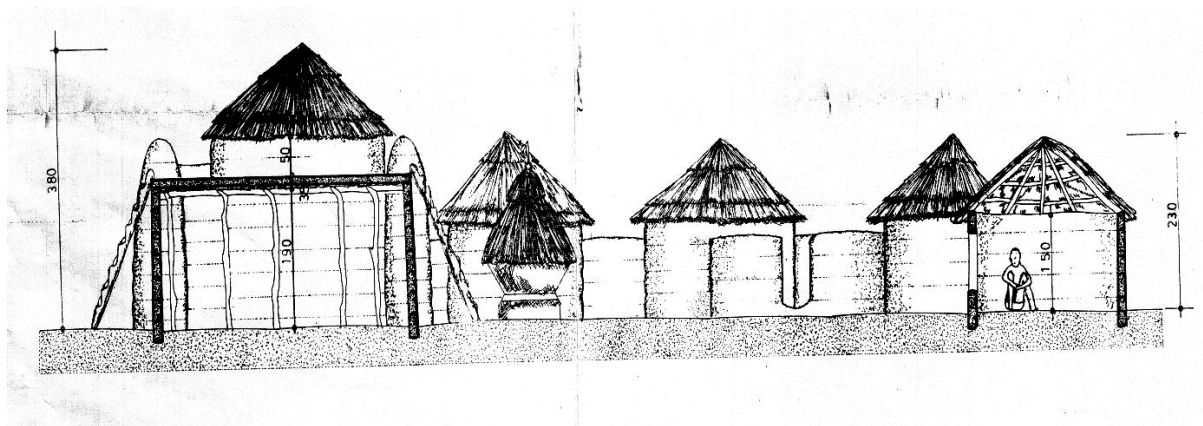


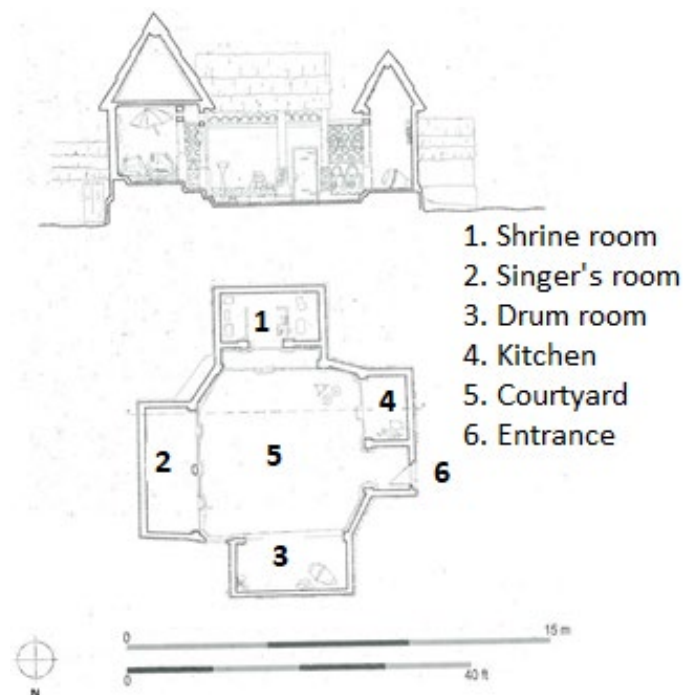
Fig. 4.4.11: Section F - F (Yavo, 2013: 105)





Fig. 4.4.12: Axonometric view of the Berba tata in Natta (Benin) (Yavo, 2013: 106)

Ashanti houses were built around a courtyard with the walls made of swish-peddled mud reinforced with stake and wattle work (Denyer, 1978: 79). The residential layout is a square or rectangular courtyard surrounded by four, wide, shallow, gable-roofed rooms (Fig. 4.4.11).



In the larger houses, several of these courtyard-and-four-room units are combined (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 276). Ashanti temples were similarly planned but grander. The shrine room was faced the courtyard (Fig. 4.4.13). With temples, a visitors' room was provided between 1 and 2. This was effectively an introverted public space.

Fig. 4.4.13: Plan and section of Ashanti home, Ghana (Fazio, Moffett, Wodehouse, 2014: 276)

The term Yoruba is sometimes said to have been derived from a foreign nickname, meaning cunning, given to the subjects of the Alafin of Oyo by the Fulani and Hausa (Forde, 1051: 1). The Yoruba are part of the Kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family whose origins, as noted earlier, lie in the mythical figure, Oduduwa. The Yoruba were a forest farming people with villages, hamlets, and small market towns scattered throughout the bush. Their innovative contribution to West African civilisation was the big town, an urban centre for iron smelting, terracotta figures, brass work, and the capital, the *ilu ilade* (ibid). The establishment of the capital was driven by trade; the market place thus assumed a prominent position in Yoruba settlements.

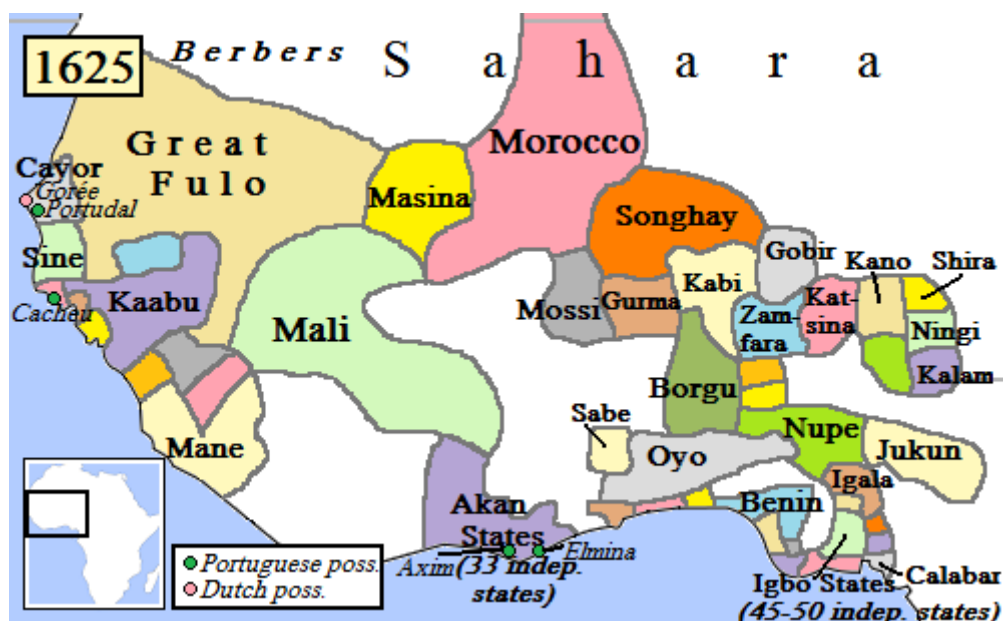


Fig. 4.4.14: The Oyo Empire and surrounding States c.1625 (By Gabagool - Own work, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6581387>)

As in most African societies at the time, the Yoruba were organised into a small number of states which were eventually dominated by the Oyo (Fig. 4.4.14). This dominance was due to the fact that they did not live in forest country and were able to build strong cavalry, buying their horses from their Hausa neighbours. After about 1550, Oyo began to extend its authority, not only over Nupe but also over some of its Yoruba neighbours, including Egba, Egbado and Dahomey, who lived in country fairly free of forests. In the 1600s, Oyo again became a strong empire (Davidson, 1965: 123).

As noted earlier with respect to African culture and identity, the power structure and council membership was based on heredity or the wealth of individuals and their families. The king or Alafin of Oyo presided over a governing council which consisted mainly of Oyo Misi nobles. They owed their position not to appointment by the Alafin (as did the new palace and town chiefs of Benin) but to their membership of certain noble families. As in the past, they chose the Alafin from a large number of princes (Davidson, 1965: 123).

The Oyo Empire ruled directly over other Yoruba groups but indirectly over peripheral, non-Yoruba provinces. The Alafin's authority was strengthened by the spread of the worship of Shango, the god who was regarded as the special protector of the Alafin and his power (Davidson, 1965: 168). The patronage system was enforced by chiefs through provision of troops for the Alafin, attendance of Alfin's festivals, and provision of any services deemed fit by the Alafin.



Besides having various city states, the Yoruba Empire is famous for its artistic prowess. Generally the arts of these people and their neighbours have remained at a high level of achievement, in a variety of styles that range from the abstract to the near representational (Davidson, 1984: 77). Plate 4.4.2 illustrates the 12<sup>th</sup> C– 14<sup>th</sup> C terracotta head of Olokun, Yoruba god of the sea and wealth.

**Plate 4.4.2: The Ife Head on display at the British Museum (Source: By, Sailko, CC BY-SA3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14783256>)**

All the Yoruba governing councils of the sixteenth century appear to have dealt with a wide range of everyday affairs, from morals and religion, to public health and security, and justice and foreign relations (Davidson, 1965: 168). They also controlled all facets of the state such as public buildings, trade and defence.

The basic traditional Yoruba housing unit was a compound – agbo'le – a group of houses. In essence this was a group of compartments, with no clear cut divisions, built in the form of a rectangle enclosing and facing an open courtyard (Ojo and Biobaku,



1966: 131). The size of the courtyards varied from large compounds belonging to the chiefs to small ones belonging to ordinary members. The size of courtyards also varied from district to district; the average size in Ekiti is only 10 feet square while it is about 100 feet square in north-western Yorubaland around Shaki (*ibid*). Compounds were connected by outlets such that each had a single outlet and in some exceptional instances, two; these were determined by the terrain. The paths form a complex network with the *Afin* (palace) and the marketplace nearby as the converging point (*ibid*).

In the main, these houses were built on flat terrain avoiding mole-hills, depressions, marshes, exposed rocks and irregular surfaces. Ant-hills were only disturbed when they were used as material for building walls; otherwise, they were left intact. Yoruba houses tended towards compactness rather than dispersal and in some cases the density resembled a honeycomb. Minor irregularities took the form of separating one house or group of houses from others (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 132). These irregularities were allowed to flourish, creating a deceptive sense of haphazardness; in fact, the Yoruba had a strong socio-political structure that gave their towns a more or less identical morphology whatever their class. The dominant features were the palace of the Oba and the principal market next to one another in the centre of the town; the main grove or temple; and two wide roads crossing at the centre (Denyer, 1978: 35). This socio-political structure was reflected in the arrangement of compound units with the inmates of a compound being responsible to the heads of the families who in turn made the head of the extended family or patrilineage (*agba ile*) their focus (*ibid*). All of them gravitated towards the chief of the quarter. Consequently, the compounds of chiefs to whom they were related or owed allegiance formed a district, ward or quarter of the town as depicted in Ado-Ekiti (Fig. 4.4.15). The chief's compound was generally the core focal point of the quarter.

As a general rule, the chief's house had a similar pattern to those of the ordinary extended family and was generally not walled in, although there were exceptions to the rule.

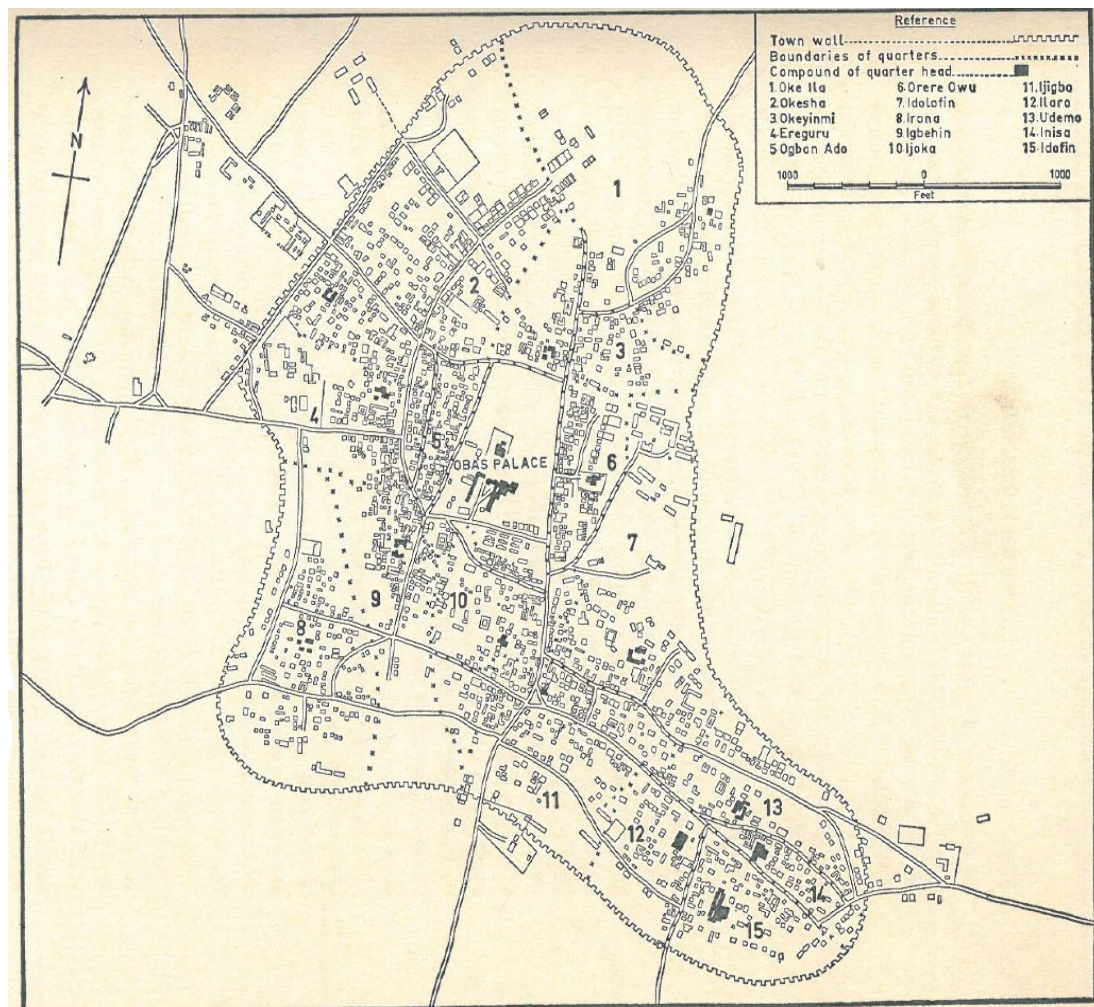


Fig. 4.4.15: Ado-Ekiti – The arrangement of quarters and buildings in relation to the Oba's Palace (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 133)

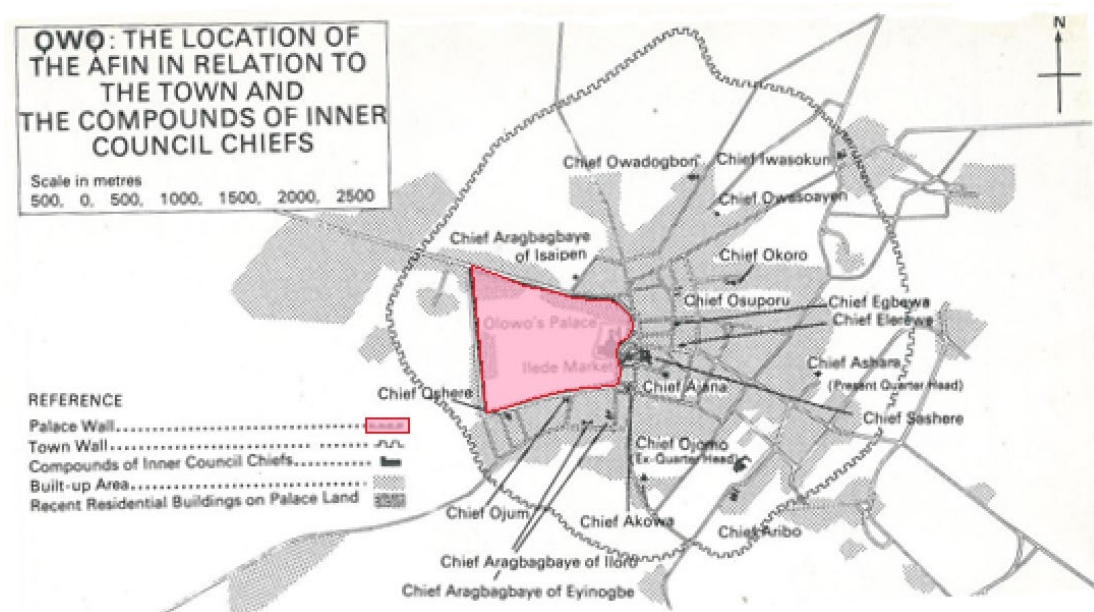
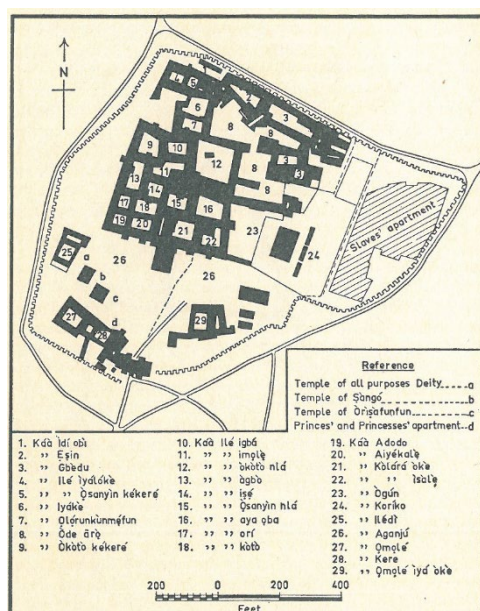


Fig. 4.4.16: Aerial view of Yoruba town of Ilorin, Western Nige, about 1950 (Denyer, 1979: 87)

All the quarters within the chief's compound were designed to orientate towards the Afin where the Oba resides, since all had the Afin as the converging point of interest (Fig. 4.4.16). The chief's compound usually had two or more courtyards depending on his rank. There were usually two courtyards, an inner and an outer. The former was strictly reserved for the use of the chief and his wives, and the latter for receiving inhabitants of the compound, especially on ceremonial occasions (*ibid*).

As discussed in the previous chapter under cosmology, the Yoruba settlements were a reflection of their world view in that the Oba was the archpriest of the living members of society who ensured, among other things, fertility in plants and animals and the indispensable link between the living and the dead (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 134). The Yoruba town reflected this by limiting the Oba's public visibility; he was only seen on a few important occasions when he performed his spiritual and political duties (Fig. 4.4.17).

Jeremey Seymour Eades (1980) states, that the Yoruba towns of the nineteenth century were heavily fortified, with the outline of the walls still occasionally visible. This is especially true around the Oba's palace. He supports Lloyd's classification of Yoruba settlement patterns into three types (Eades, 1980: 44):



1. The capital of the Kingdom is surrounded by its farmlands which extend to between three and ten miles from town, and farm villages. The villagers claim membership of one or the other of the compounds in the capital. Examples are Oyo and Ado.

Fig. 4.4.17: The Afin of Oyo in 1937 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 136)

2. A very large capital surrounded by farmlands and villages which extends up to 20 or 30 miles from the capital. There are fewer subordinate towns and most



farmers claim membership of a compound in the capital. Examples are Ibadan and Abeokuta.

3. Differ markedly, with the farmland surrounding the capital extending for only a mile or two. Beyond are many permanent villages that do not claim membership in the capital. A smaller proportion of this type is involved in farming. An example is Ijebu Ode.

The three types can be viewed from a settlement development trajectory.

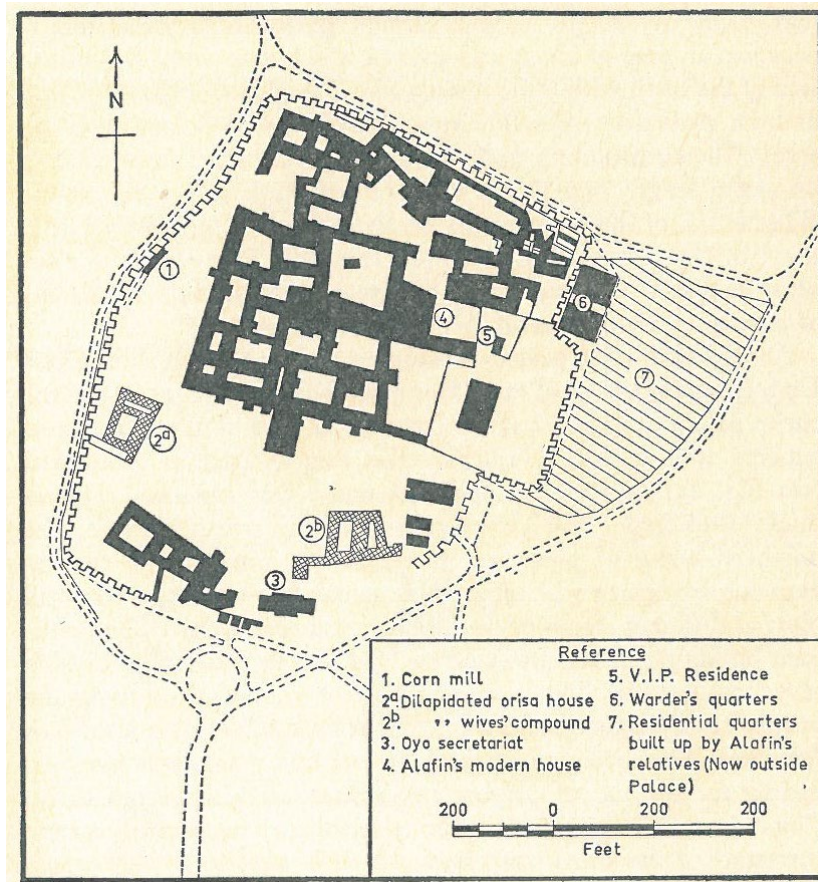


Fig. 4.4.18: The Afin of Oyo in 1964 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 137)

The Afin at Oyo was built around the Yoruba's cosmological, socio-political beliefs; as a result he was known as the Alafin – the owner of the palace – a name reserved for him alone in the whole of Yorubaland.



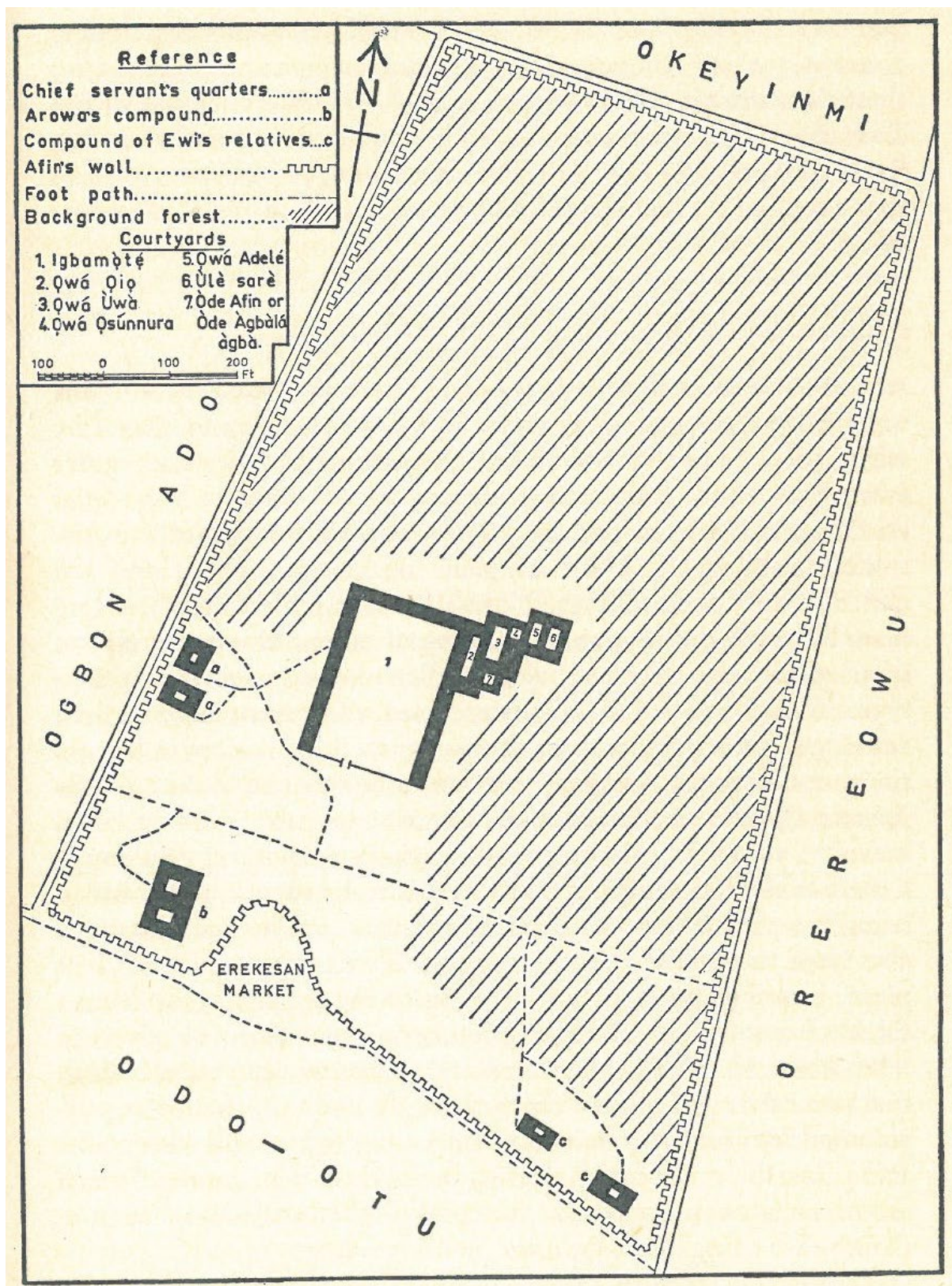


Fig. 4.4.19: The layout of the Afin Ewi in 1923 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 139)



The current Afin at Oyo is a smaller version of the original one at Old Oyo, which had a forest around it. Unlike many other palaces, its form has not changed noticeably except in the re-roofing of the building with corrugated iron sheets and in other minor alterations Illustrated by a comparison of Fig. 4.4.17 (1923) and 4.4.18 (1964) and equally 4.4.19 (1923) and Fig 4.4.20 (1964) respectively (*ibid*) for the two settlements.

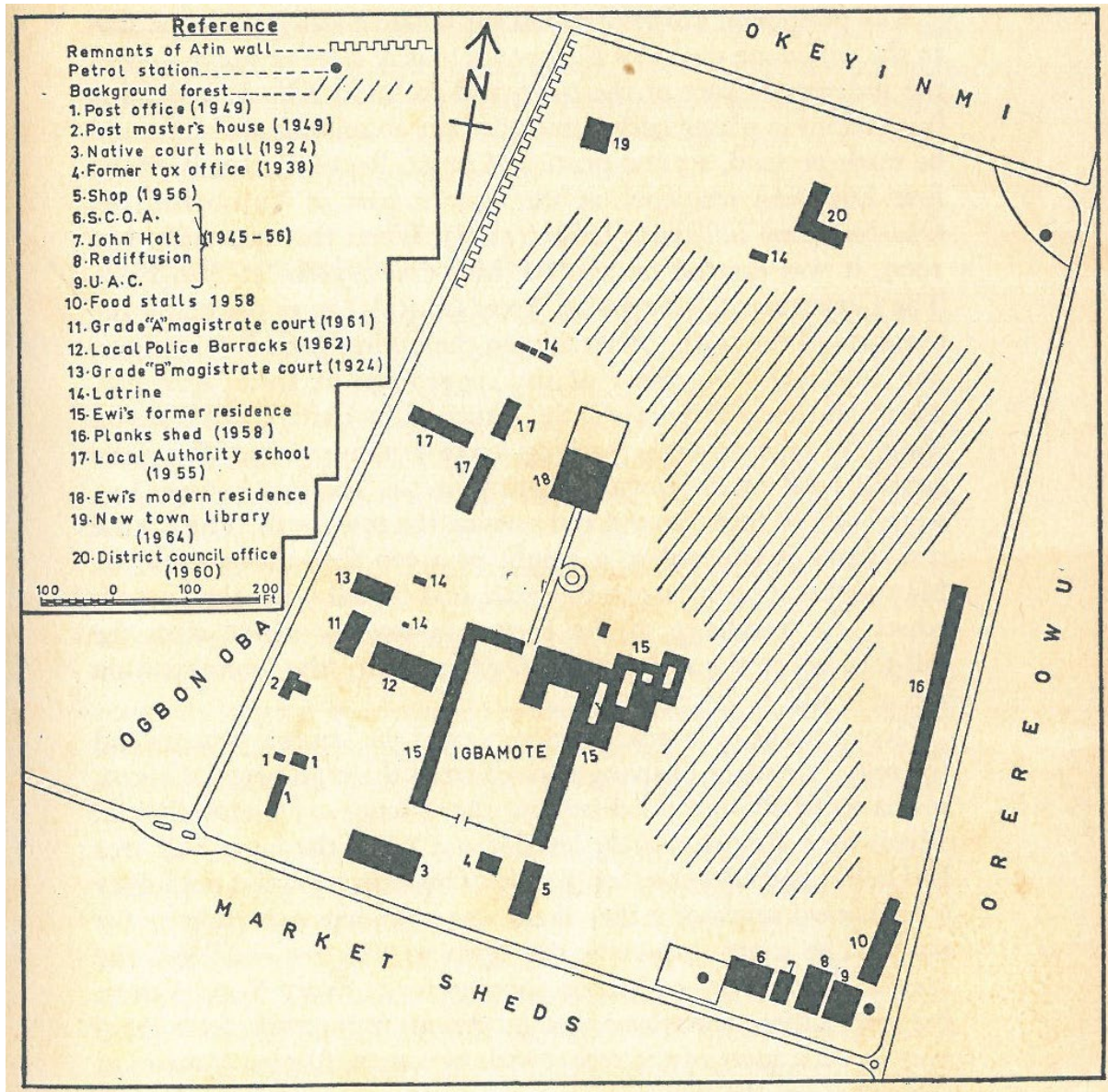


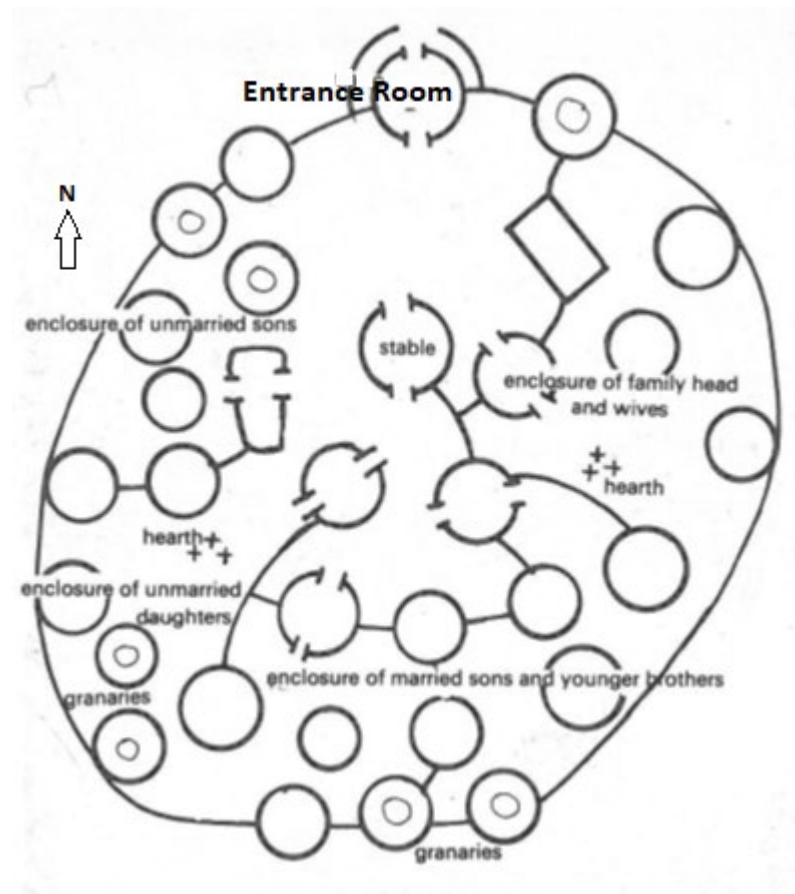
Fig. 4.4.20: The layout of the Afin Ewi in 1964 (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 145)

There are numerous extensive Yoruba palaces, including the Afin of Ewi. The dominant building was the Ewi's house, 284 feet by 251 feet, enclosing seven courtyards. The first and largest courtyard, serving the purpose of a public stadium, is 230 by 150 feet and is known as Igbamote (Ojo and Biobaku, 1966: 138). The second

courtyard reserved for princes and princesses was 80 feet by 27 feet (*ibid*). In essence, Yoruba space is spacious around the Oba's palace and responds to his cosmological and socio-political status and hierarchy.

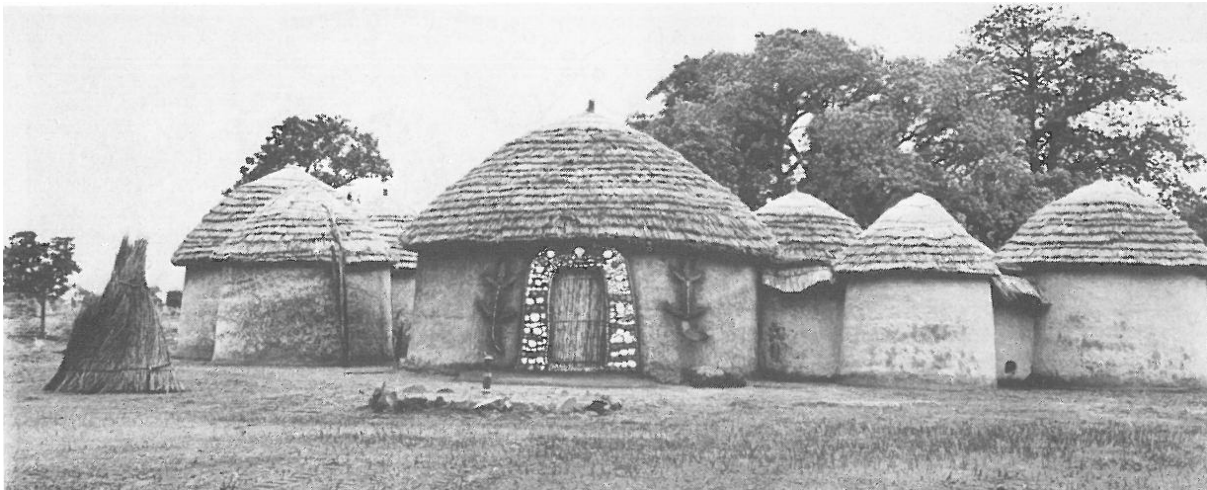
The example of the Yoruba is a general Afrocentric response to the environment as discussed earlier. The centre in self is explicitly expressed collectively with the king being the king by the people's express wishes (see Chapter Three). Communal life is of essence in an African society, with the fireplace a centre of communal activities.

In most African compounds, cooking spaces are indoors and outdoors, as are recreational spaces. In outdoor spaces, they would normally have a roof and low walls to protect them from the elements. In some cases a cooking area is totally exposed outdoors – a completely different approach from Eurocentric concepts.



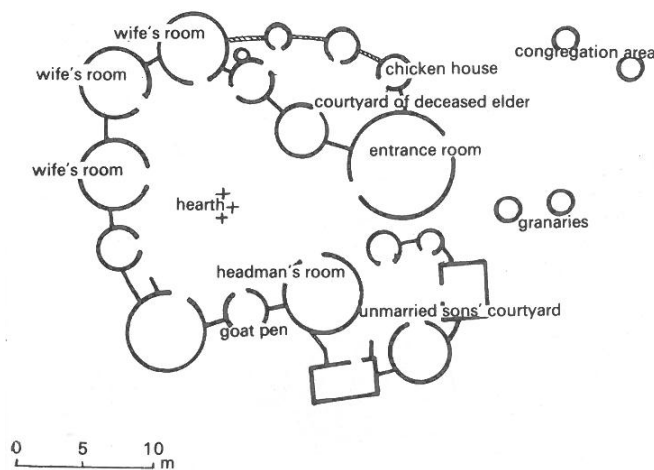
**Fig. 4.4.21: Plan of a Nupe Chief's House, central Nigeria, about 1940 (Denyer, 1978: 145)**

The hearth is located outdoors as a social gathering place for the inhabitants of the compound. In this instance the fireplace is a civic space – a feature found even among nomadic peoples of Africa (Fig. 4.4.21).



**Plate 4.4.3: Dagomba homestead, northern Ghana, about 1970 (Denyer, 1978: 147)**

The Dagomba lived in nuclear villages with about 60 compounds similar to the one shown here, tightly clustered together. The size of the entrance building (Plate 4.4.3) is associated with its use as a stable for horses as well as a reception room (Denyer, 1978: 147).



**Fig. 4.4.22: Plan of a Dagomba homestead, Northern Ghana, about 1965. The Hearth is the "civic centre" (Denyer, 1978: 147)**

The fireplace is once again outdoors, emphasising the centrality of the hearth as a civic space. The only rectangular buildings were occupied by unmarried sons who visited southern Ghana during the dry season and on their return wished to have corrugated roof sheets on their houses – such sheets were not considered a suitable circular/organic built form.

Basic principles emerge that can be linked to historical, cultural, and mythological factors as well as symbolic interaction theory to project an Afrocentric angle into contemporary design of both buildings and civic spaces. Civic spaces are generated through seemingly mundane activities such as a fireplace as well as complex socio-



political structures. The following section discusses pre-colonial civic spaces in East Africa.

#### 4.4.2 Selected traditional architecture of East Africa

The concept of space is in its rudimentary state when viewed through nomadic architecture. A single space to accommodate activities is common across African culture. The Rendille settlement eloquently illustrates this point. The Rendille are Eastern Cushitic camel pastoralists who for many centuries have lived and moved camels in low-rainfall, semi-deserts between Lake Turkana and Mount Milgis and Mersabit.

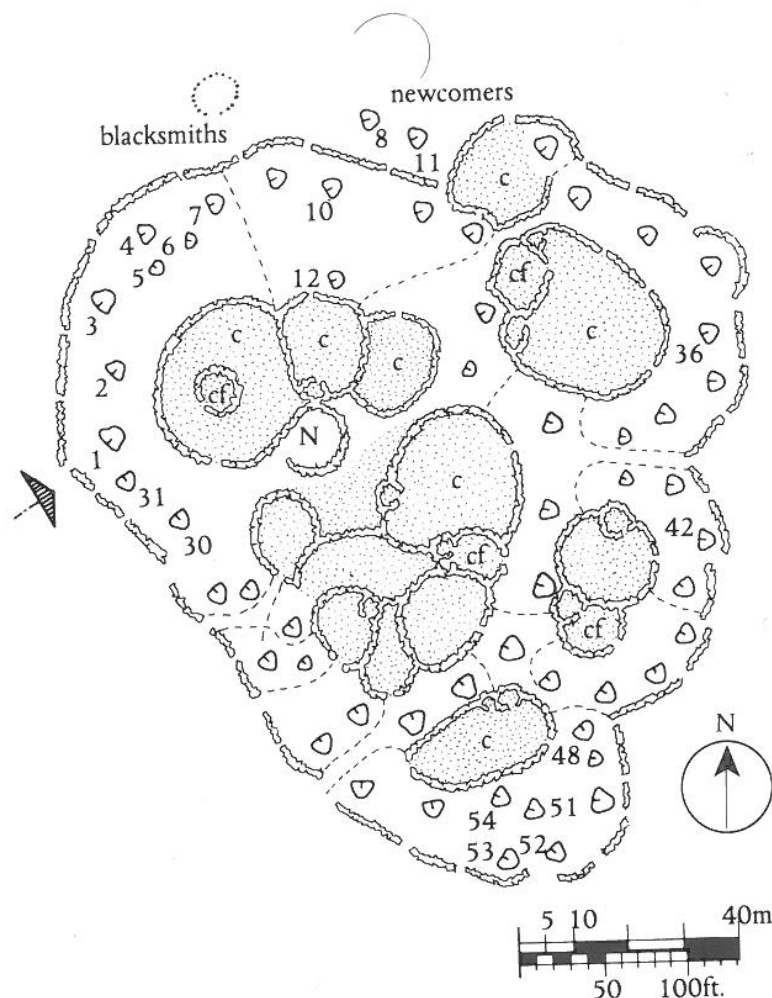
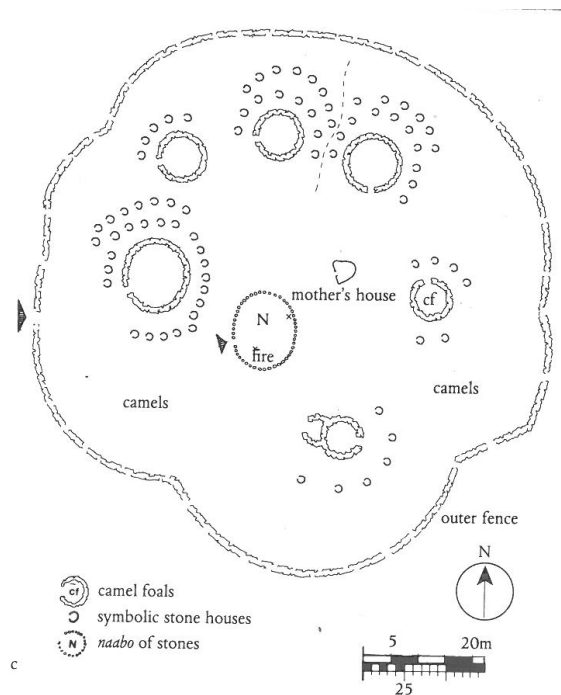
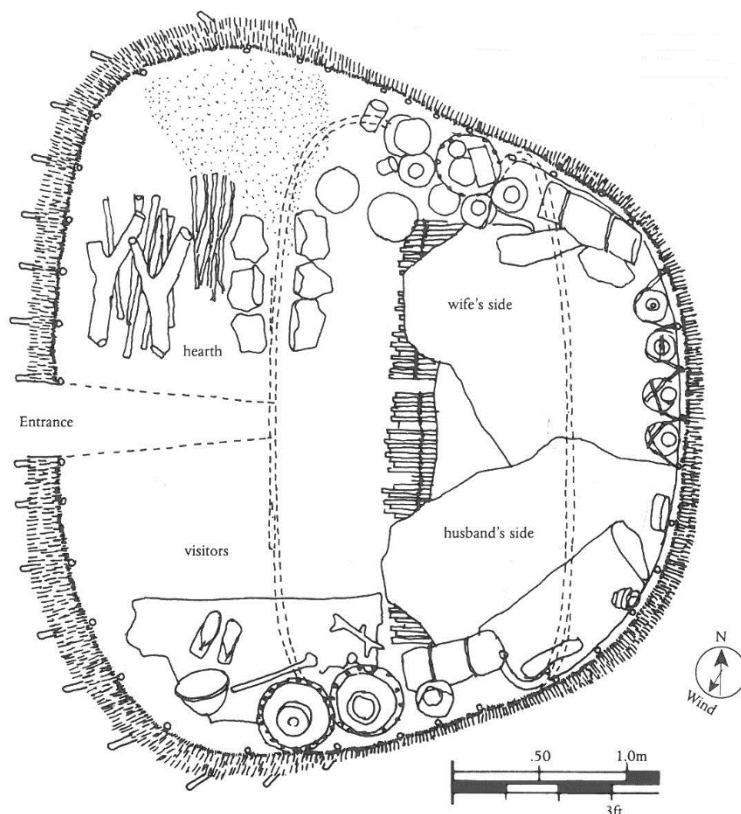


Fig. 4.4.23: Settlement layout of Goob Wambile. Legend 1, 2, 3, 4 ... The order of tents by seniority and familial group; c: Camels; cf: camel foals; yc: young camels; N: naabo; m: muruubs with milk (Prussin, 1995: 152)



**Fig. 4.4.24: Diagram of a nabo settlement showing the centrality of the fireplace as a public space (Prussin, 1995: 153)**

A typical Rendille settlement has 30 to 50 houses with each married woman and widow owning a house which was built for her on the day of her marriage (Prussin, 1995: 150). The spatial arrangement approximates a circle oriented towards the west, that is, all houses are placed with their doors facing a point to the west just outside the circle (Fig. 4.4.23).

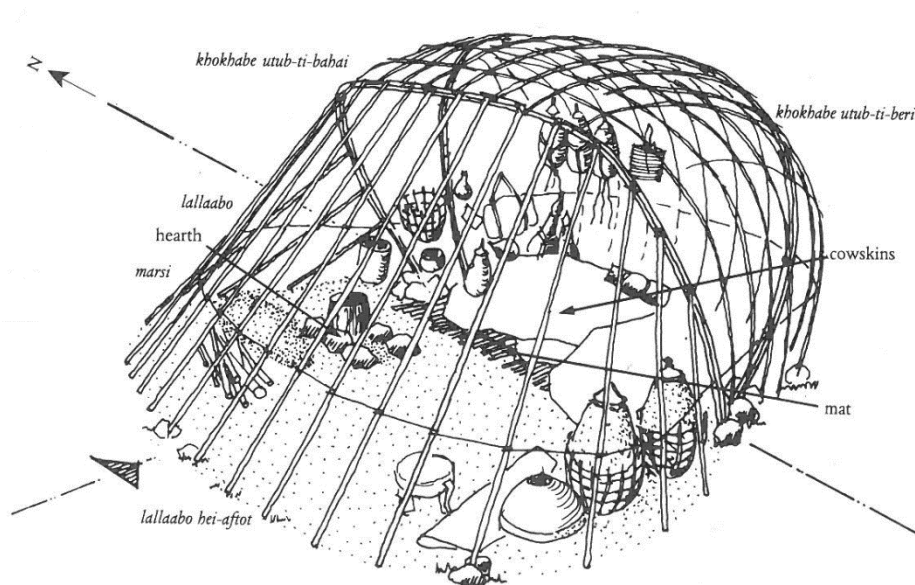


In a Rendille settlement, a naabo is a central stone enclosure where a fire burns day and night (ibid). This is a meeting place for elders and also acts as a religious and command centre for management of the settlement (Fig. 4.4.24).

**Fig 4.4.25: Plan of a typical Rendille tent (Prussin, 1995: 158)**

The Rendille house (min, pl. minan) is a portable, demountable structure whose structural principles are consistent, while the size varies according to needs (Prussin, 1995: 155).

The standard house of the majority of the Rendille is almost circular, but wider on each side of the entrance, forming pockets (Fig. 4.4.25 and Fig. 4.4.26).



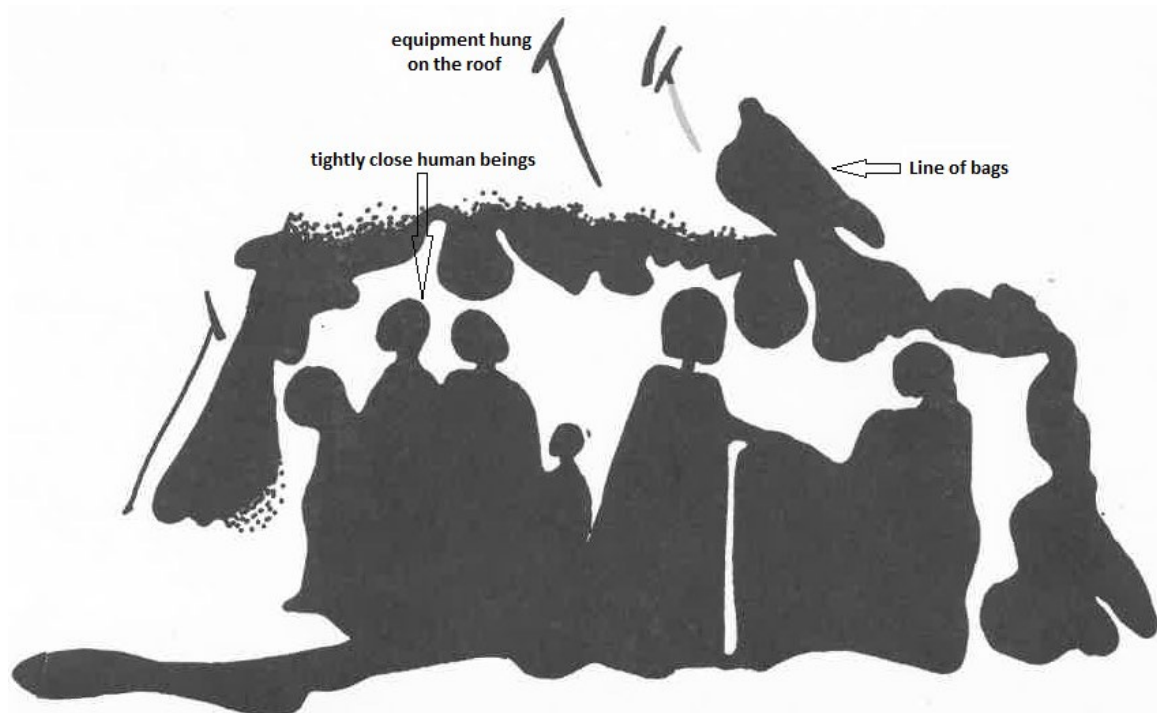
**Fig. 4.4.26: The basic architectural structure of the Rendille tent house (Prussin, 1995: 155)**

The interior of a Rendille house is divided into a front, western half which is more public and utilitarian, and a back, eastern half which is more private (Fig. 4.4.25). Similarly, in the other direction, it is divided into a northern half which is essentially female and a southern half that is essentially male (Prussin, 1985: 158). As in most African cultures, the units are essentially a single volume defined by functions.

Another interesting way of life that has a potential to benefit Afrocentricity is the symbolism found in African art.

#### **4.4.3 African art as basis for Afrocentric placemaking**

As demonstrated by the Bennelong's Sydney Opera House and the Tempere Main Library, symbolism plays an important part in identity construction. African art is imbued with symbolism that embodies a way of life – cosmological values – that also reflect the ecological settings. Perhaps the most famous of all is the Khoi San rock paintings. These reflected the inhabitants' *genius loci*. The paintings would reveal the sizes of groups and the ambience in their dwellings together with the equipment used in sourcing food (Fig. 4.4.26).



**Fig. 4.4.27: Group of human figures reflecting size of group and dwelling (Lewis-Williams, 1983: 15)**

Ecological settings were clearly depicted in their art symbolisation. This included the game (Fig. 4.4.28).



**Fig. 4.4.28: A painting preserved in the South African Museum, Cape Town shows a juxtaposition of birds, therianthropes, baboon and men to reflect the ecological setting (Lewis-Williams, 1983:56)**

These animals were authentically African and belonged to this ecological setting and so is the dwelling depicted in Fig. 4.4.27. These depictions reflect the Khoi San and their worldview as indicated by the symbolically dying eland with its head lowered and slumping legs. The dying eland gave life to the living – thus becoming a source of life sustenance. The Khoi San artists were moved by an innate desire to produce beautiful objects; an aesthetic imperative drove them to express themselves in paint (Lewis-Williams, 1993: 41).



**Plate 4.4.4: The Democratic Republic of Congo's Baluba head-rest (A) – showing embrace - and stool (B) - showing communality (Segy, 1958: 104, 105)**

Civic spaces are about communality. They are about a collective centre. The Baluba of the modern Democratic Republic of Congo carved stools and headrests that were about communality and welcome (Plate 4.4.4). The spirit of welcoming and togetherness are evident. Just as the Mitsu is to the Finish so should the African art and all it represents. This can be achieved through interpreting African identity using symbolism and sculpture. These could be design ideas for both civic building and landscaping.

Civic spaces varied across the African continent in precolonial times with the social structure being the prime driver, with this, in turn, influenced by cosmological orientation. Civic spaces were marked by market squares, celebration spaces or mundane features like a fireplace. In general, spaces were placed in relationship to the King's residence, for example in the Yoruba case, or to the head of the family as in the Rendille case. The forms were predominantly organic. The advent of colonialism brought its own influences. The following section examines this era with a focus on civic spaces typified by squares.

Each piece of African art is a symbiosis of individual talent and tribal art pattern and hence identity. The individual conformed, basically, to the tribal art pattern for the same reasons they conformed to the beliefs, customs, and taboos of his people Segy, 1958: 31). The belief systems of an African were either distorted or given a death sentence at the arrival of European colonialism. The European brought the gun, religion, and trade goods, and conquered the best area which produced the best African art, the ancestral ways were largely destroyed or neglected (*ibid*). Everything associated with the so-called modernity played its part in destroying traditional culture in Africa in this particular instance African civility and its space. The next section investigates the homeland of colonialism with respect to civic spaces. This is being carried against the backdrop of precolonial Africa.

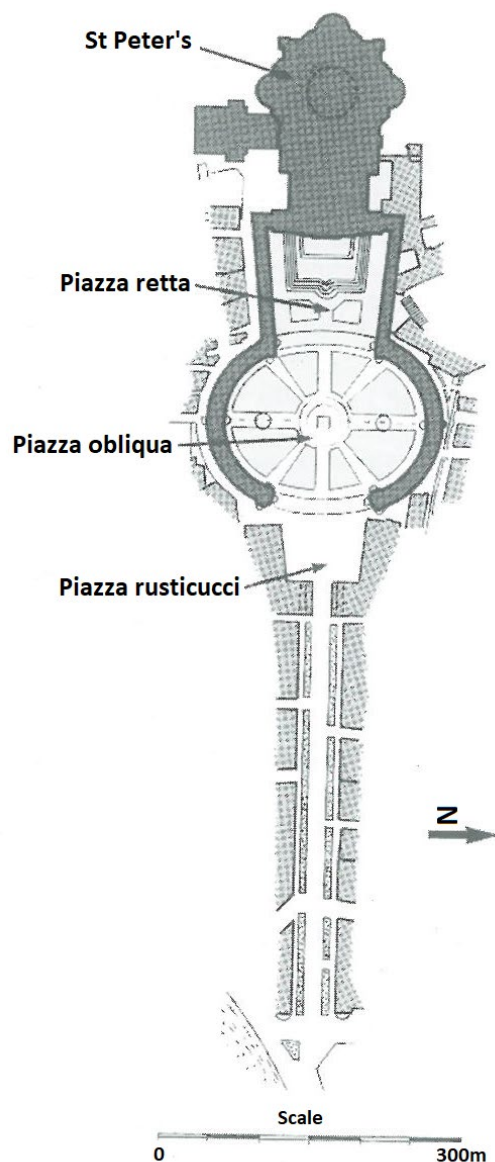
#### 4.5 THE SQUARE AS CIVIC SPACE: A Western historical continuum

As noted previously, the colonisers attempted to recreate home-country-like places in Africa, especially with respect to civic spaces. Squares and piazzas were typical of European civic spaces and have a long history, some of it steeped in Greek mythology. St Peter's Square in Rome has left an indelible mark on humankind as a piece of art in the mould of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

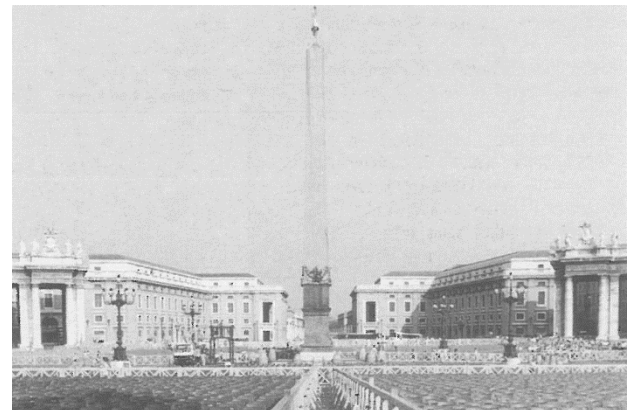
The square is for the city what an atrium is for a home. It is the well-equipped and richly appointed main hall or reception room (Moughtin, 2003: 90). St Peter's Square (Fig 4.5.1; and Plates 4.5.1. and 4.5.2) is one such space and more. It is the centre of



the Catholic universe that symbolically represents the very centre of Christ's Kingdom. The concept of centre should once again be noted. It is a perceptual symbolisation of Christianity's cosmological image. The square is the "reception room" of international Christian pilgrims. It can be considered as an enclosed square from Cliff Moughtin's (2003: 99) conceptualisation.



**Fig. 4.5.1: St Peter's Square Plan (Moughtin, 2003: 91)**



**Plate 4.5.1: View into the Square with Bernini's obelisk erected in 1586 (Moughtin, 2003: 92)**



**Plate 4.5.2: View out from the square (Moughtin, 2003: 92)**

The unique relationship between the open area of the square, the surrounding buildings, and the sky above create a genuine emotional experience comparable to the impact of any other work of art (Zucker, 1969: 1).

This section chronicles the square as a civic space. A square or plaza is both an area framed by buildings and one designed to exhibit its buildings to the greatest advantage (Moughtin, 2003: 92). The underlying principle is how space and architecture are designed to accommodate collective human activities to project a sense of community.

The following sub-section discusses the historical development of the square as a civic space.

#### **4.5.1 Historical development of the square as a civic space**

Civic spaces accommodate a crucial aspect of urban life. They are the cornerstone of such life and their design with respect to architecture or urban design can make or break a city in relation to a sense of community. Civic spaces accommodate public life and are at the heart of communities. If one visualises the streets as rivers, channelling the stream of human communication – which means much more than mere technical “traffic” – the square represents a natural or artificial lake (Zucker, 1969: 2). Like towns, squares could have imaged from natural activities and grown unplanned or they could have been planned.

Manifold conditions further the natural growth of a square, including the intersection of important thoroughfares within the town, and the open space at the approach of a bridge or in front of the west façade of a church, etc. (Zucker, 1969: 3). Unplanned squares are naturally driven by lifestyles around a given setting. The setting could vary from one community to another from a gathering at the deep tank in an African setting through to growing congregations with both communities requiring more services and thus creating a heart of communal, intermingling activities that turn into a square. In contrast to these organically grown squares, the planned square always appears as clearly defined as any individual place of architecture (*ibid*). Planned squares, clearly recognisable as such, appeared in ancient Greece and her colonies from the fifth century BC onwards (*ibid*).

The designs of early planned squares are not substantiated by any archaeological evidence although they were underpinned by the gridiron scheme that was introduced in Greece and Asia Minor. The same holds true for the most grandiose of



indigenisation of squares in antiquity, the Imperial Fora in Rome (Zucker, 1969: 4). The planned square had its ups and downs over the centuries but the most monumental developments took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the time of Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci onwards. It was during this golden period that architects competed passionately for the design of squares in towns and cities as much as with churches, palaces and gardens (*ibid*).

The abundance of squares in Italy and France can be explained by a combination of climatic conditions and the temperaments characteristic of the Romance peoples of southern and western Europe. These conditions led to a form of public life – and life in public – which made the street and square the natural locale for community activities and representation (*ibid*).

Elements that constitute a square such as surrounding structures, monuments, fountains, surface finishes, paintings, new buildings, and general landscaping, etc. may be spread over time due to redesign, conflicts, and social and political dynamics. Destruction and introduction of new elements maintain and reflect the generational times of the square.

#### **4.5.2 The Square from irregular to ordered civic spaces**

People's movement is influenced and directed by three-dimensional confines and by the structural lines of such confines; in other words, general tension becomes a specifically "directed" dynamic tension. If these confines are architectural structures, their volume and scale exert pressure and resistance and stimulate and direct reaction to surrounding spaces (Zucker, 1969: 5). The character of civic spaces is determined by the composition and type of its individual constituents. Users therefore react to both the psychological effect of the square and its physical elements, i.e., the row of surrounding structures, expansion of the floor, and the imaginary sky dome above.

The ambience of the civic space is determined by these three factors. Each can vary: the surrounding structures (the wall) may vary in height, proportion and design; the ground floor may vary in expansion (width and length), finishing materials, landscaping, and levels; whilst the sky with its varied weather patterns offers an

imaginary ceiling to the square. The correlation of these constituent elements that confine a square is based on the focus point of all architecture and city planning: constant awareness of the human scale (*ibid*).

The types of civic spaces include street malls, domains, gardens, etc. This section deals with squares because they resemble the case study this research focused on. Paul Zucker (1966: 8) identifies five square archetypes:

- The closed square: space self-contained;
- Dominated square: space directed;
- The nuclear square: space formed around a centre;
- Grouped square: space units combined; and
- The amorphous square: space unlimited.

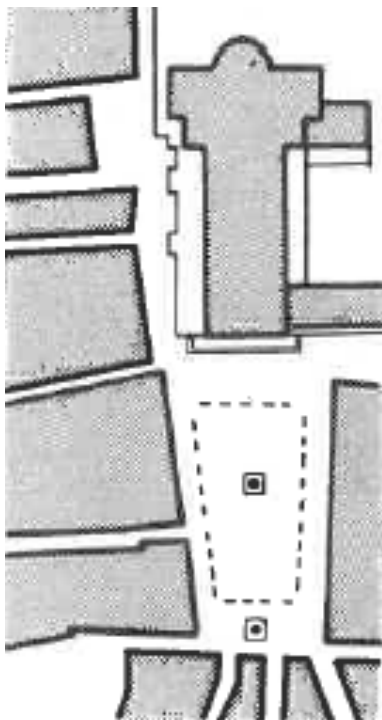
The closed square is generally visualised as a completely enclosed space that is only interrupted by streets that flow into it.

Cliff Moughtin (2003: 99) brings the closed and dominated square together in a single variant and calls it an enclosed square because he argues that enclosure brings about the purest expression of a sense of place, the centre. An example of a dominated square cited by Sitte is the Santa Croce in Florence (Moughtin, 2003: 105) (Plate 4.5.3 and Fig. 4.5.2) – in the next page.

Without being tied to specific historical periods, this type of square appears in its most perfect form in the Hellenistic and Roman eras and then again in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Zucker, 1969: 9). A balance is struck between the horizontal and vertical physical elements with each facade fulfilling a dual function: individuality in the structural integrity of a singular element (building) and commonality in the composition of urban spatial order within and beyond the square (*ibid*). In this instance, the issue of architectural styles is immaterial. In antiquity, from Hellenistic agora to the Imperial Fora in Rome, continuity and context of the framing structures were achieved by the *porticus* (colonnade), the rhythmical repetition of the vertical direction through columns (Zucker, 1969: 10).



**Plate 4.5.3: The Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, with all main views leading to it (Moughtin, 2003: 106)**



The dominated square is characterised by one individual structure or group of buildings towards which the open space is directed and to which all other surrounding structures are related (Zucker, 1969: 11). The dominant building could be a church, city hall, a museum, public library, railway station, theatre, an architecturally designed fountain or any other monumental structure. The dominating structure pulls the spectator towards itself. In most cases the main street leads into the square facing the dominant building. In some instances the dominating structure could be a gate or an arch.

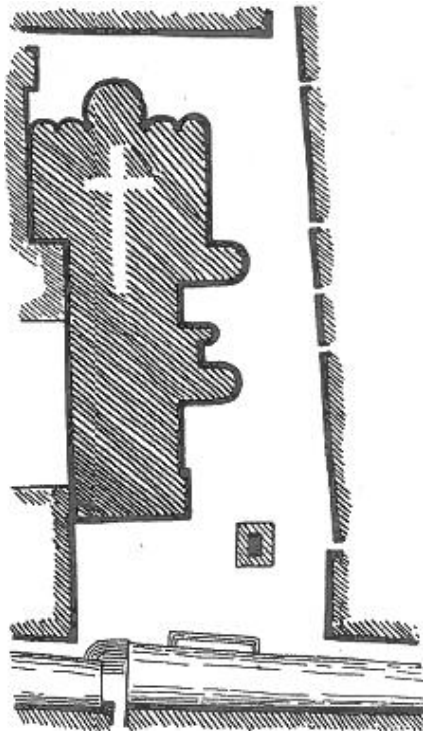
**Fig. 4.5.2: The dominated/enclosed square of Santa Croce (Moughtin, 2003: 106)**

A nuclear square is a self-contained space of the closed square, shaped by the continuity of the surrounding buildings (Zucker, 1969: 13). The capacity to respond to design stimuli differs greatly with each individual; furthermore, the level of public

response has varied in different countries and at different times in history (Bacon, 1967:50). This point puts a square, as a civic space, squarely in the realm of repose – a place to reflect, relax and compute one's position in the urban context.



**Plate 4.5.4: View into the Piazza di SS. Giovanni E. Paolo showing the Verrocchio's Colleoni monument (Zucker, 1966: Plate 37)**



Architects and designers use movement as an architectural design tool to mark moments of repose and they may be pregnant with meaning and history, thus, instigating various emotional responses among users.

One of the most brilliant historical examples of a human channel of movement is the Panathenaic procession in ancient Greece which occurred every four years (*ibid*) (Fig. 4.5.4).

**Fig. 4.5.3: The Plan of the Piazza di SS. Giovanni e Paolo (Zucker, 1966: Plate 37)**

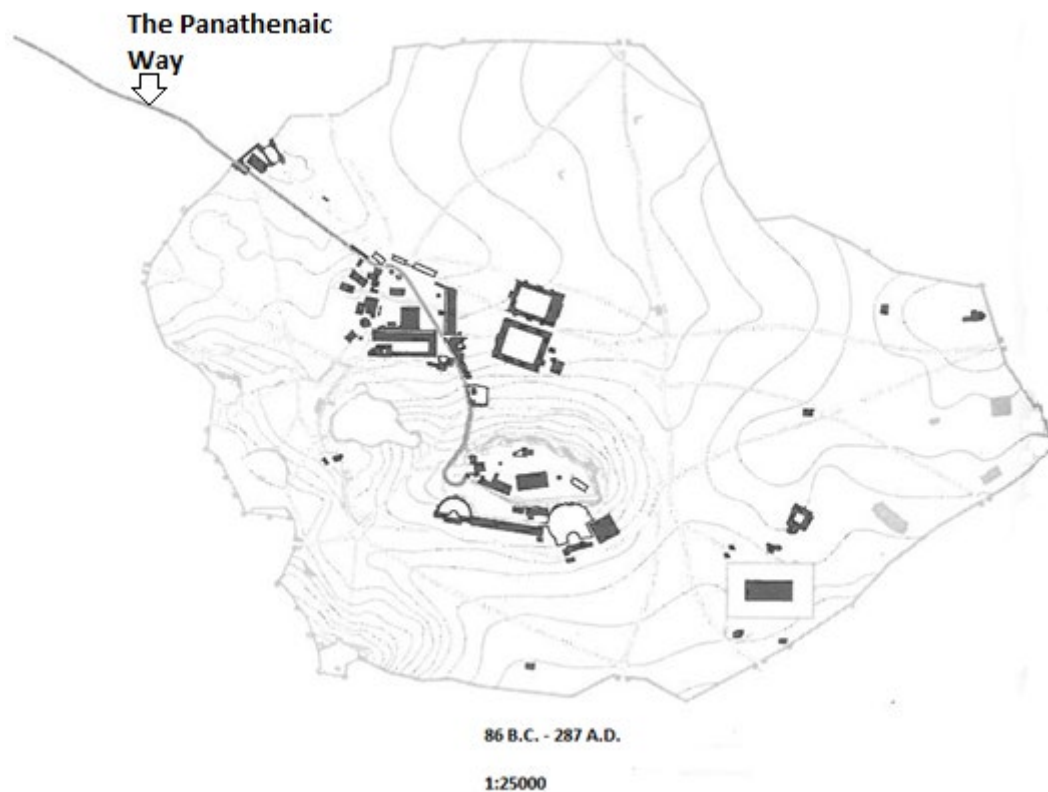


Fig 4.5.4: The form of the agora integrated with the design and development of Athens as a whole (Bacon, 1967: 52)

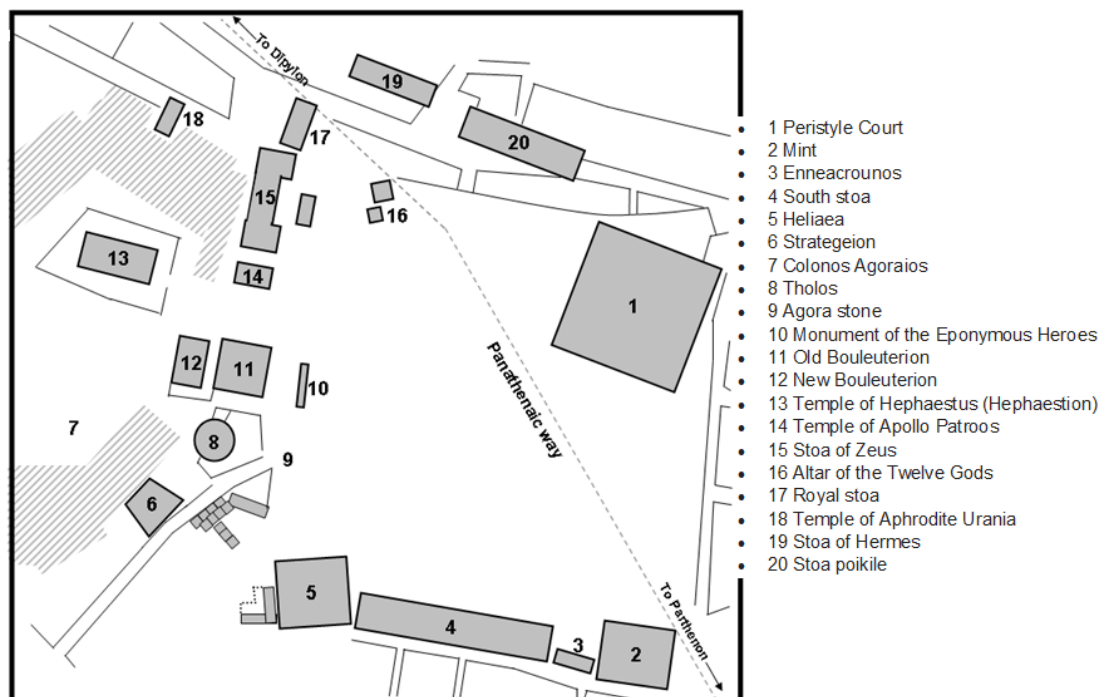


Fig. 4.5.5: Plan showing major buildings and structures of the agora of Athens as it was in the fifth century BC (Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopaedia)

The superb placing of the Hephaisteion, the product of a deliberate act of will, part of the way up, but not at the highest point of, the long ridge adjacent to the Panathenaic Way, set in motion a shaft of space which, by its intersection of the movement along the Panathenaic Way, establishes a point in space (Bacon, 1967: 53). The architecture responded not only to movement but also to historical context. Plate 4.5.5 shows how the architecture of the Temple of Hephaestos responded by interlocking with the Parthenon, reaching out across space and thus creating interrelations and tension in one breath.



**Plate 4.5.5: Architecture interlocking two historic buildings through space and time – The Temple of Hephaisteion and the Parthenon (Seen through the last opening on the right) (Bacon, 1967: 54)**

With these basic points established – the simplicity of the single central movement system through the city, and understanding the value of memory and of response to forms – one can view the Panathenaic procession not merely as human and animal spectacle in harmonious movement, but as the central organising force in the architectural and planning development of Athens (Bacon, 1967: 51). The Panathenaic Way highlights this point and specifically how Athens grew around it (Fig. 4.5.6).

The procession was a major event in the civic life of Athens and took place along a clearly marked route extending from the Dipylon Gate at the city wall across Athens and up the slopes of the Acropolis to the culminating point, the statue of the goddess Athens (*ibid*) The citizens of Athens were afforded an opportunity to be active participants instead of onlookers. The Panathenaic processions and those participating in it became the design generator of Athens' urban form through providing punctuating points along its length (Plate 5.5.5).

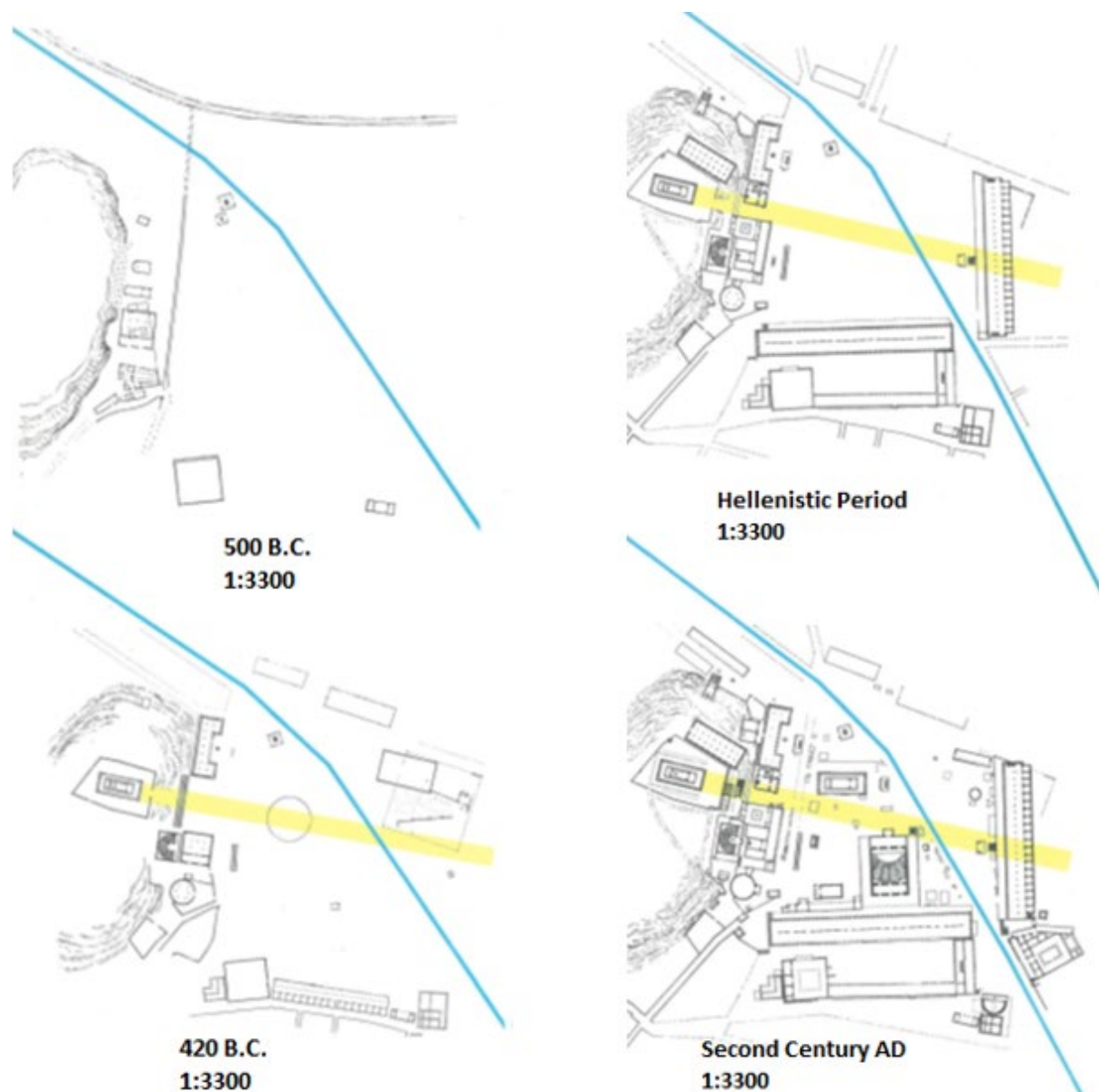


Fig. 4.5.6: The evolution of Athens' amorphous agora form (Bacon, 1967: 56 – 57)

The Panathenaic Way, shown in blue in Fig. 4.5.6 passes diagonally across a somewhat amorphous agora. The second illustration shows the development of the agora soon after the Hephaisteion began to make its influence felt as an ordering element in about 420 BC (Bacon, 1967: 56). The Stoa of Zeus sets a long horizontal line at the base of the hill, and the broad flight of steps furnishes a fine visual base for the temple (*ibid*). During the Hellenistic period, the agora reached full maturity with the south stoa (a covered walkway for public use) being rebuilt at a different angle and the new middle stoa added (Bacon, 1967: 57). In this way the space of the agora was better contained. As the pressures of civic life exploded in the second century, the new temple of Ares was built in front of the Stoa of Zeus, and many fountains and statues were added to the plan. This was the end of the earlier clean, uncluttered public place.

Symptomatic of the architectural disaster to come, a huge, clumsy structure of Odeion, an indoor meeting hall designed to accommodate a large number of people, was added to the family of buildings in the original agora (*ibid*). The gigantic structure of the hall threw earlier historical and sensitive structures out of scale and reduced their influence in Athens' urban design. This was a turning point in the history of the Athens' agora and from here on it deteriorated. The agora was finally destroyed by the Herulians in 267 AD leaving an indelible litany of lessons for future architects and designers through the ages to this day.

The Greek towns set the tone for Roman and other European towns with respect to the square as a civic space. There is a general misconception that Greek towns originated from one mythical figure with all else falling into the plan. In reality these towns originated from a conglomeration of various villages. For example, Marathon was a combination of four villages as was Eleusis. Equally, Athens was founded by Theseus by conglomerating existing villages (Zucker, 1959: 16). In similar fashion, Greek colonisation created cities of both irregular and regular patterns. The chaotic web of streets in Athens, still in existence deep into Roman times, and many similar layouts prove that this irregular pattern was general throughout Greece.

From at least the seventh century BC onwards, an acropolis existed in connection with each larger settlement as well as a void of irregular shape which would later become the agora (Zucker, 1959: 27). There are two critical approaches to any defensive



settlement: creating a centralised settlement and choosing a protected hilltop. The acropolis took the latter option, establishing it as a defensive seat of the rich and powerful over time. The acropolis initially provided refuge and security, gradually became the seat of the powerful and finally, was a sacred place where temples, monuments, and alters were located as were the palaces of the Kings in earlier times (*ibid*). The acropolis lost two of its critical functions due to the natural growth of Greek towns. The defensive function was gradually lost due to the building of a perimeter town wall and its gathering functions were lost to the agora with the growth of the town.



**Plate 4.5.6: View of the ancient agora. The Temple of Hephaisteion is to the left and the Stoa of Attalos to the right (Wikipedia – The Free Encyclopaedia)**

As the focal point of the town, the agora was usually located in the centre if topographical conditions permitted, and as close to the port as possible in harbour cities (Zucker, 1959: 31). The agora's functions changed from being a market centre to being a purely commercial place and it lost its political administration centre to enclosed buildings (*ibid*).

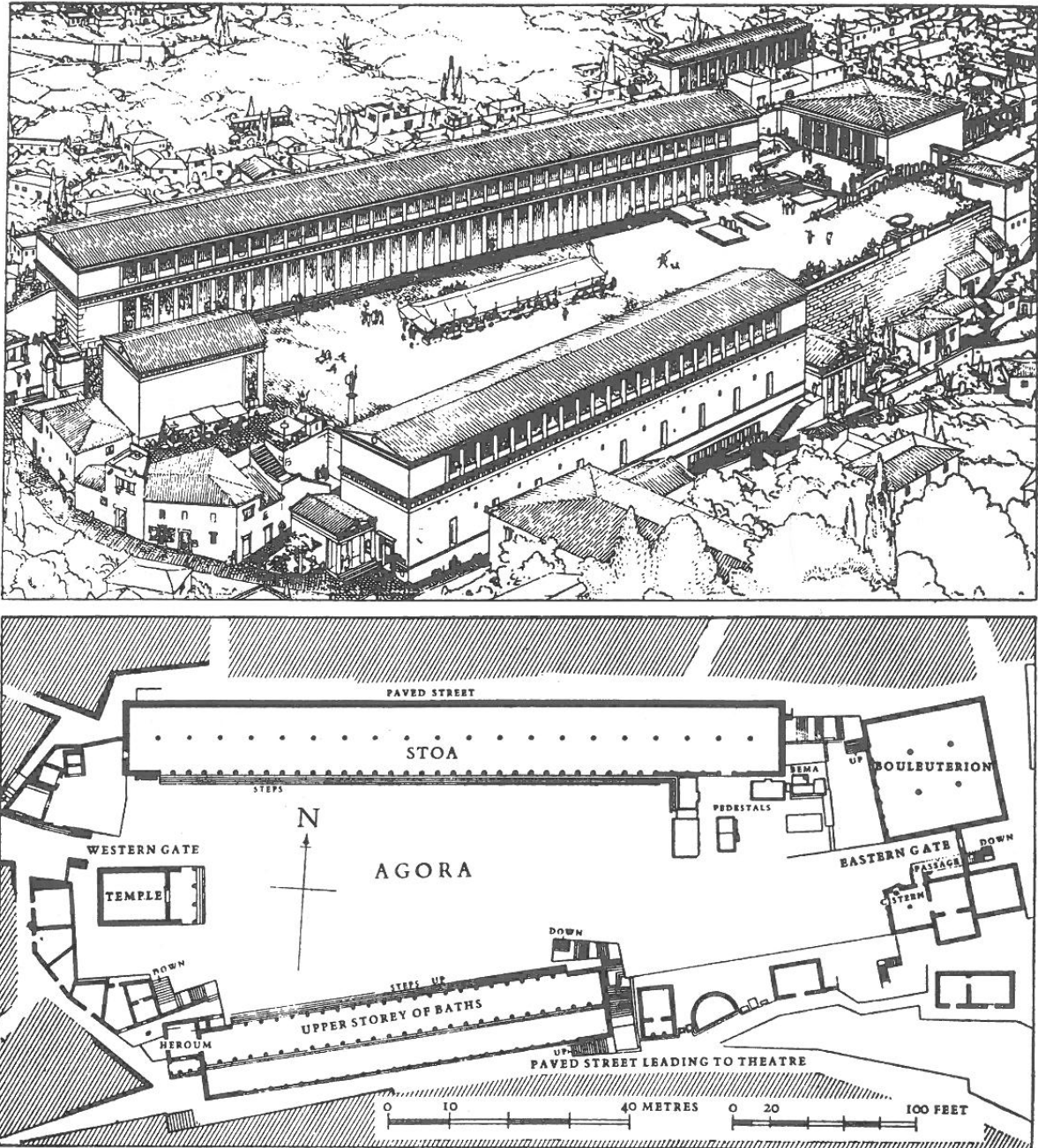


Fig. 4.5.7: Assos, The agora plan and reconstruction 3D view (Zucker, 1967: Plate 6)

In Assos (Fig. 4.5.7), the agora is located on a level slope and surrounded by trapezoidal porticoes with the north side occupied by a hall with the space directed towards a temple. The whole plan is not strictly axially organised in response to the nature of the topography. The desire for the impression of a closed square, rhythmically directed towards a temple shows certain similarities to later Roman examples (Zucker, 1959: 39).

In contrast to Greece, the general layout of Roman towns and the form of their civic centres are inseparably integrated – an analogy to the centralised state system and the concept of strict order which pervaded Roman communal life in general (Fig. 4.5.8). Since the pattern of the whole town was axial, even to some degree symmetrical, the centre was emphasised as the controlling factor in the visual appearance of a town (Zucker, 1959: 60).

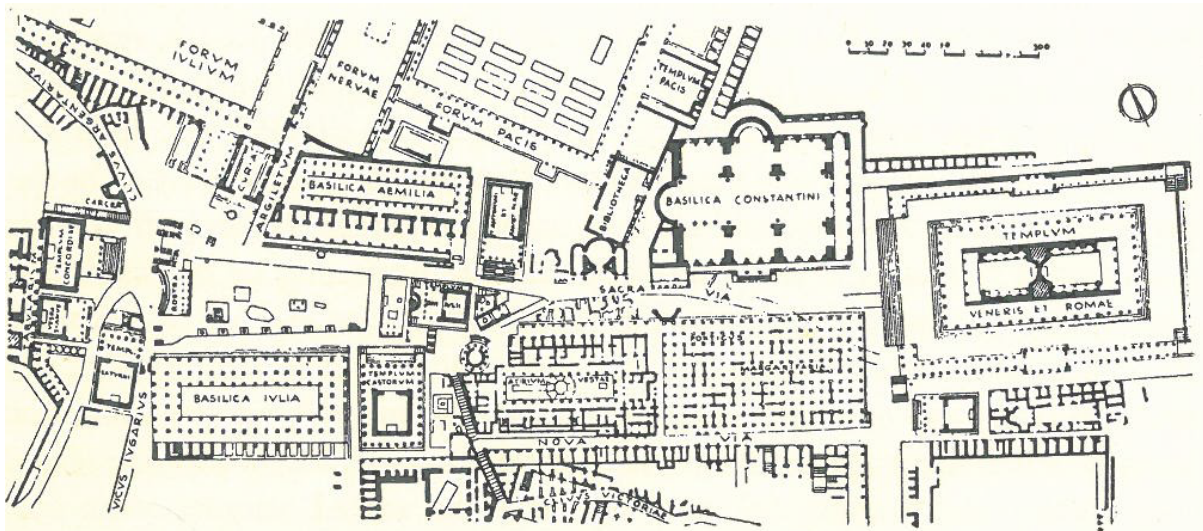


Fig. 4.5.8: The plan of the Roman forum (Zucker, 1966: 50)

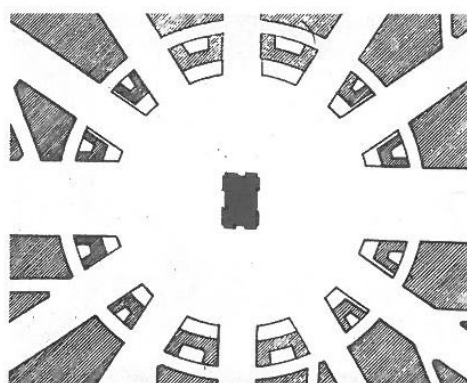
Limiting space is an important characteristic of Roman architecture and planning and it was consciously applied and achieved through closing spaces by surrounding them with vertical planes constituted of porticoes and edifices. These spaces were opened by the introduction of the axis. Roman layouts always terminated with monuments in the form of buildings or statues even if there was an axis. Together with the basic idea of axuality and symmetry, this distinguishes the Roman fora as original and different from the archaic and classical Greek agora and even from the attempts of the late Hellenistic period, just as the Roman basilica differs from a Greek temple (Zucker, 1959: 61).

Developments in civic spaces that had a direct impact on colonial Africa occurred between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.



### 4.5.3 Eighteenth to nineteenth century civic space designs

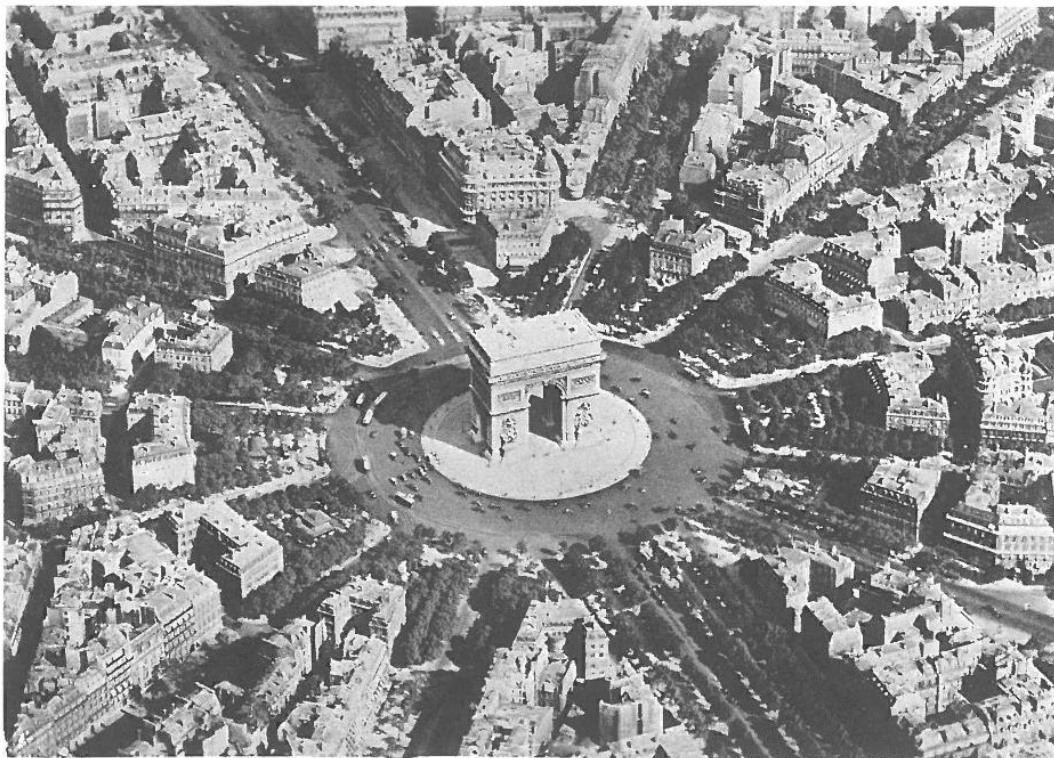
The eighteenth century squares from which streets radiated preserved some features of the seventeenth century square, namely, the irrelevance of axial direction within the square and the erection of a central monument. In other words, the space of the square remained autonomous, and the new relationship to streets and vistas outside contributed to the spatial effect of the square proper (Zucker, 1959:179). The vistas provided a backdrop to the monuments, thus allowing visual closure as would be expected in a Romanesque square.



PARIS. PLACE DE L'ETOILE

PLAN

AERIAL VIEW



**Plate 4.5.7: An example of a square that is overtaken by its size and thus fails to work as a single unit (Zucker, 1959: Plate 72)**

The eighteenth century conceived of a square not as closed space, as did the seventeenth century, but rather as a centre for expanding space, its frame well pierced. The primary idea was to create the best possible intra-urban integration between the square and its surrounding quarters. The Place de l'Etoile, planned at the very end of the century, realises this idea in the most monumental way (Zucker, 1959: 192). The Place de l'Etoile with the Arch of Triumph (Plate 4.5.7) has become one of France's symbols and can no longer be considered to be a square due to the size of its overall area and the 12 streets that run into it. The open void can no longer be perceived as a single space due to landmark buildings.

The French taste, if not the French style, dominated Europe throughout the eighteenth century, effectively colonising it with respect to political, economic, cultural and fashion superiority (Zucker, 1959: 195). Dominance in these fields was driven by rational thinking in creative processes combined with regimentation by academic rules. The strict regularity and rigid formalisation of the French space concept were generally accepted and the *places royales* of France, as well as the architecture of Versailles, were copied or imitated with minor national variations across Europe (Zucker, 1959: 195). Aside from France and Italy, countries that built notable squares, included England and Germany.

Although topographically close to one another, most of London's squares are closed entities without any spatial relationship, connecting axis, regular grouping, or vistas from one to another, or into the neighbouring quarter (Zucker, 1959: 201). At the end of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century a new square appeared in London which infuses landscaping with architecture with one delicately balancing the other. The champion of this approach was John Nash. In 1812, he conceived of a town planning idea which combined monumentality with the free forms of nature: Park Crescent, adjacent to Regent's Park (Zucker, 1959: 201). These projects were driven by real estate entities and developers; he thus had to think of larger units and continuous blocks that unified the facades with open spaces.

The yellow in Fig. 4.5.9 represents the route of Regent Street that connects the two parks, Regent's Park and St James' Park, whilst in black are the structures originally designed by Nash or replaced in accordance with his architectural designs and layout.

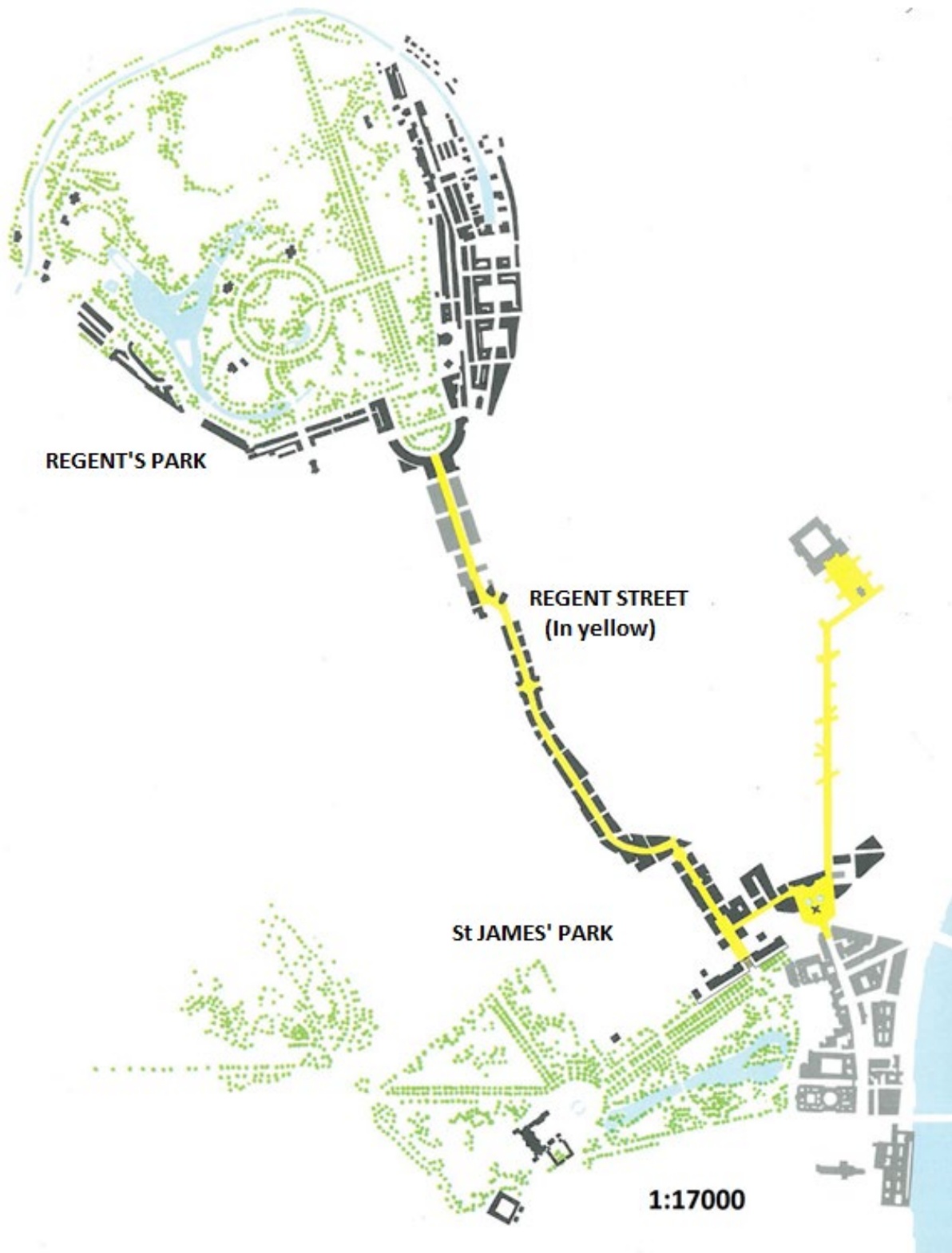


Fig. 4.5.9: Regent Street connecting two parks – Regent's Park at the top and St James' Park below  
(Bacon, 1967: 186)

Around Regent's Park, like two hands clasping a precious substance, is the two-mile-long stretch of terrace houses which gives architectural definition to the park (Bacon 1967: 187).



**Plate 4.5.8: Curvilinear forms used to encircle the green spaces (Bacon, 1967: 187)**

Park Square and the semicircle of Park Crescent (Plate 4.5.8), serve as a powerful connector with the older Portland Place lined with Robert Adam's and James Adam's architectural designs (*ibid*). Park Crescent was originally designed to be a closed circuit consisting of two circles.

The idea was never carried through, and was abandoned in 1822, only to become a semi-circular square with the green of Regent's Park stretching into it. The two large quadrants of the half-circle with double-columned Ionic colonnades encircling the whole perimeter are paralleled by a very narrow paved strip, immediately adjacent to the peninsula of lawn and green (Zucker, 1969: 202, Plate 4.5.8). This project set a precedent for the concept of crescent design and became a tradition in London's squares in the nineteenth century. It provided a delicate balance between nature and architecture.

The composition of facades and building typologies are critical in the making of civic spaces. Building typologies should complement one another as was the case when the decision to build the parish Church of Saint Marylebone enriched the design of the park. This prompted Nash to provide an interruption in York Terrace and make another penetration into the old city, reinforcing the one established at Portland Place. The engraving in Plate 4.5.9 shows Saint Marylebone Church encased in the prism of space defined by two ends of the buildings that make up York Terrace (Bacon, 1967: 190). Here, the interlocking of two structures is obtained by two masses at the opposite sides of the connecting plane, thus provide a closure that contains the civic space in between.



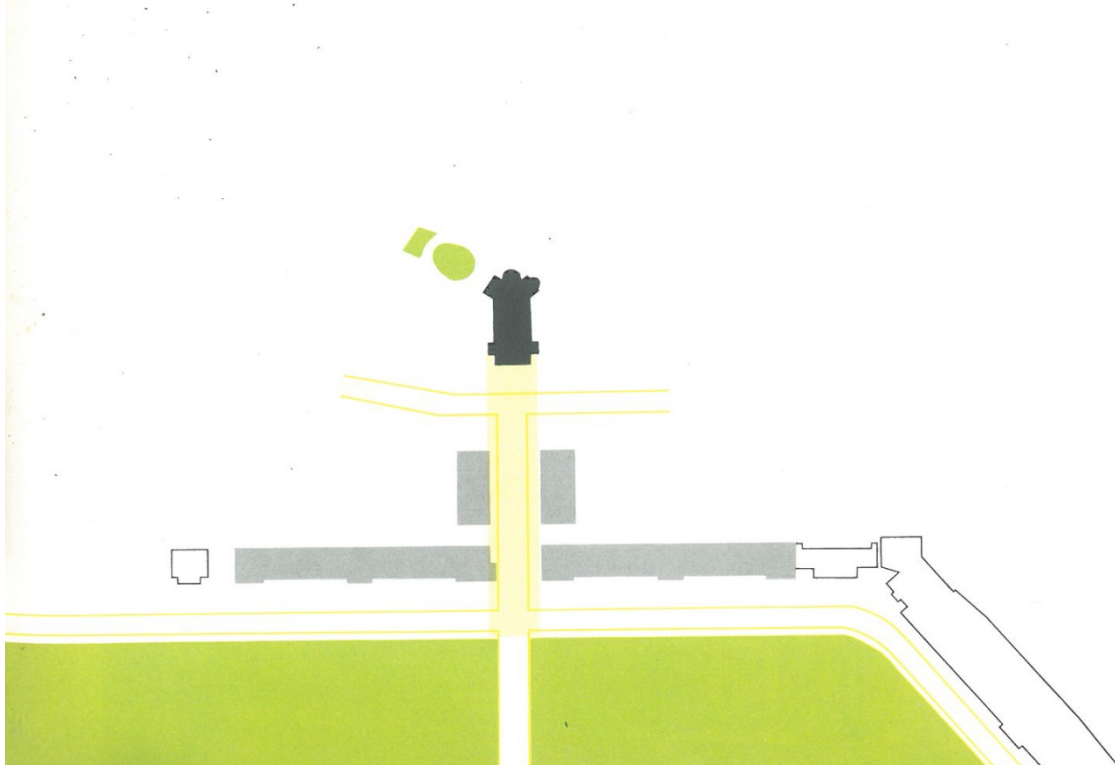
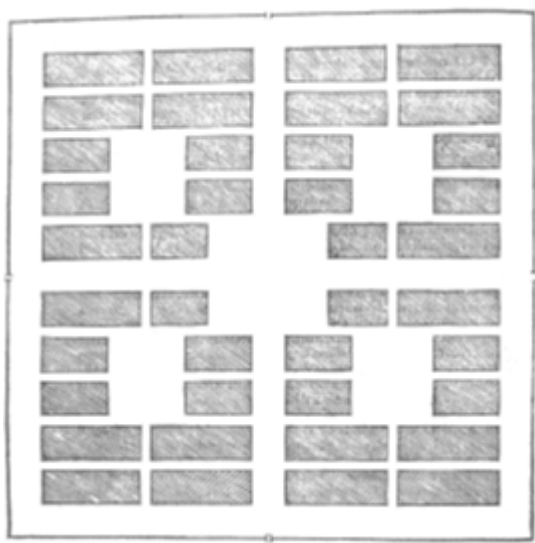
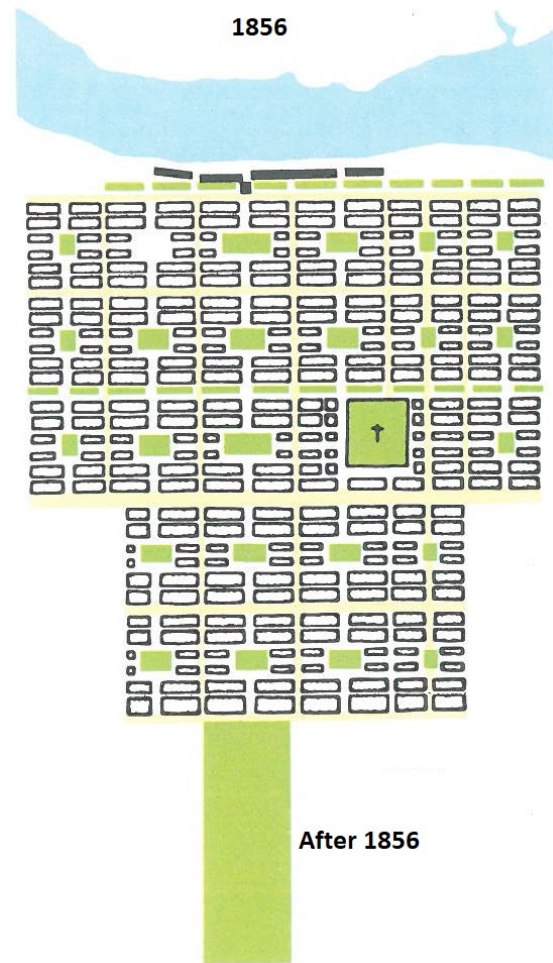


Plate 4.5.9: Church of Saint Marylebone providing a closing frame to a civic outdoor space (Bacon, 1967: 191)





**Fig. 4.5.10: (top): Design of an ideal city by Pietro di Giacomo Cataneo influenced by Vitruvius' Roman planning principles (Bacon, 1967: 202)**



**Fig. 4.5.11: (right) – City plan of Savannah, Georgia, influenced by Pietro di Giacomo Cataneo's city design principles (Bacon, 1967: 202)**

Thomas Holme's design of Philadelphia (1683) and James Oglethorpe's design of Savannah (1733) can be attributed to the classical rationalism of Vitruvius and the intellectual speculations of the Renaissance scholars (Bacon, 1967: 203). This city plan has efficient streets on the normal gridiron pattern which bypass the square-centred community, and which, by the very fact of their large scale, are more efficient traffic carriers than through streets at every block (Fig. 4.5.10). The notable feature in James Oglethorpe's city plan (Fig. 4.5.10) is the use of the square as an organising element in urban design.

The visual effect of looking down the lines from the squares is both dynamic and exciting through providing various vistas. When one is within these squares, one feels totally removed from the hustle and bustle of the traffic within the precinct. The gridiron

system was used as an organising element in city planning in colonial cities such as Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where the case study is located.

This section discussed the history of the square civic space from a historical perspective, from the Greek agora through to its application as an element in urban design in America. The precedents discussed run through to the nineteenth century around about the time of the Berlin Conference that set the boundaries of the African continent, most of which are still respected by “independent” Africa. The square as an organising element in urban and city planning was introduced in a number of colonial cities, disregarding pre-colonial African settlement organising elements. The study now turns to colonial Africa and its architecture with specific reference to squares as civic spaces. Squares as civic elements have to be understood in their context. This implies that the general architecture of the period in that town or settlement has to be taken into consideration.

#### **4.6 ARCHITECTURE AND SPACE IN COLONIAL AFRICA: Selected examples**

The colonised were deprived of their social and political identity and that with respect to built forms. For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to define and contextualise decolonisation. It can be argued that decolonisation is one of the most important developments of the twentieth century. Colonialism was fiercely contested in Europe and its colonies and possessions (Kennedy, 2003: 1 – 6; Rothermund, 2006: 1).

##### **4.6.1 Defining colonialism**

This section provides a broad definition of colonialism with a focus on former British colonies as the case study, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, was part of that empire. The heyday of British colonialism was the century from 1815 to 1914. Its bedrock was racism; some would argue that the major problem of the twentieth century was the colour-line – the relationship between lighter skinned and darker skinned people in Asia and Africa (Du Bois, 1903). Hyam (2006: 27) argues that Europeans’ chief preoccupation from 1914 was totalitarian aggression; this persisted until 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell. This

does not detract from the fact that racism was the over-arching definer of colonial policies and practices in:

- Nazi Germany
- America – before the civil rights movement
- Australia – in the days of “White Australia”
- South Africa – during the apartheid era
- Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) – from 1965 to 1989

Colonialism can be defined as the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control of another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically (Google dictionary). It can be considered as attitudes and the justification of ideologies (racism, cultural superiority, or the “white man’s burden”) that sustained colonial domination. In the twentieth century, colonialism did not mean White settlement as much as domination of the land and control of the indigenous population (Betts, 2004: 114).

#### **4.6.2 Colonialism in Africa and its impact on built form**

The construction of various European empires around the world was not an event but a process that was brought to an end by the onset of decolonisation. European colonisation comprised five phases:

1. From early maritime expansion to the Seven Years War which ended in 1763;
2. Consolidation of colonial rule until the 1870s;
3. The high tide of imperialism until 1914;
4. The sequence of war-depression-war;
5. Post-war imperialism as a rear-guard action against inevitable decolonisation.

(Rothermund, 2006: 15)

The protagonists of the first phase were the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Dutch that established seaborne empires. These countries developed advanced nautical technology and oceanographic navigation and shipbuilding that saw coastal trade centres established in Latin America and Asia. In this initial stage, only a few countries imposed their rule on the territories they navigated; they included the Dutch in the Netherlands Indies (Indonesia) and the Spanish in Latin America.

This phase saw the growth of professional armies that were a combination of powerful field artillery and well drilled infantry. New developments in international finance and military strategies culminated in the Seven Years War from which Great Britain emerged victorious (Rothermund, 2006: 16). The British fought wars in Canada and India and were assisted in their European endeavours by Frederick the Great of Prussia. The French who forged an alliance with Spain, suffered setbacks and had to wait for the third phase to revive their imperial efforts.

The second phase was dominated by Britain that followed the Dutch in participating in trade in the Far East. While British imperialism was tempered by Spain's success in the Spanish Americas, it was consolidated during this period with increased volumes of goods being produced overseas for the empire's benefit, resulting in economic growth from 1850 to 1875. Much of this growth was due to London being the centre of international finance.

The third phase was marked by conflicting trends. Most parts of the globe that had not yet been colonised were subjected to foreign rule, with the Scramble for Africa being the most notorious sequence of events. Colonialism on this continent was officially sanctioned during the Berlin Conference on the Partition of Africa (Oliver and Atmore, 2002: 110 – 123).

The Berlin Conference of 1884, which regulated European colonisation and trade in Africa, is usually referred to as the starting point of the conquest of Africa (Jacobs, 2014). While the language used by the colonisers to refer to colonisation was pacification, in most cases it involved violence. Colonial luminaries included individuals such as Frederick Lugard who served as a British Governor in Nigeria from 1912 to 1919. He had enough troops on the ground to subdue local populations with historical ethnic divisions with ease even without the support of the home government (Jacobs, 2014: 68). Although he was a junior official that was dispatched to sign treaties with local chiefs, Lugard had a tremendous influence on British foreign policy. While he was not above deception and intimidation in gaining agreement, the treaty he signed with the Buganda Kingdom softened the impact of colonialism for that country (which gave its name in modified form to the country of Uganda) (Jacobs, 2014: 69).

The fourth phase marked the end of the glory of European imperialism. As was the case before the First World War, Britain had no control over international trade. The Great Depression reduced the value of colonial possessions and only indebtedness kept most colonies under colonial rule.

The banning of slavery between 1807 and 1814 brought about a redefinition of Europe's purpose in Africa. The initial focus was on turning the African population into industrious peasants working on cash crop plantations as was done in India and South America. The arrival of Germany and Belgium on the African scene increased competition for the continent's resources. There was little to gain per se; these colonial incursions were driven by the exigencies of political leverage in a global chess game – the English against the French, the French against the English, the Portuguese against the French and the English, and so on (Ching, Jarzombek and Prakash, 2007: 665).



**Plate 4.6.1: The classical image of the Union Buildings marking the union of the British and the Afrikaners (Google – Accessed 14 December 2017)**

The discovery of gold in South Africa in 1876 was a huge boost for the Dutch population in that country but also attracted the British who were eager to control the world gold market; this led to the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899 -1902). The British

took possession of South Africa and Herbert Baker designed numerous buildings, the most famous being the Union Buildings in Pretoria (ibid).

The South Africa's Union Buildings (Plate 4.6.1) in Pretoria was designed as the centre of the nation, representing reconciliation after the horrors of the war. It has a half-round shaped middle that housed its main functions, like committee chambers, with two identical blocks on the side, representing the Boer and the English populations. As was the case throughout the colonial era, Africans were not part of identity creation as if they were non-existent, although they were in the majority.

While the apparatus of colonial rule was of modest dimensions before the war, it was more formidable by the end of the conflict. The concept of economic planning that emerged during the war became the backbone of post-war imperialism (Rothermund, 2006: 19).

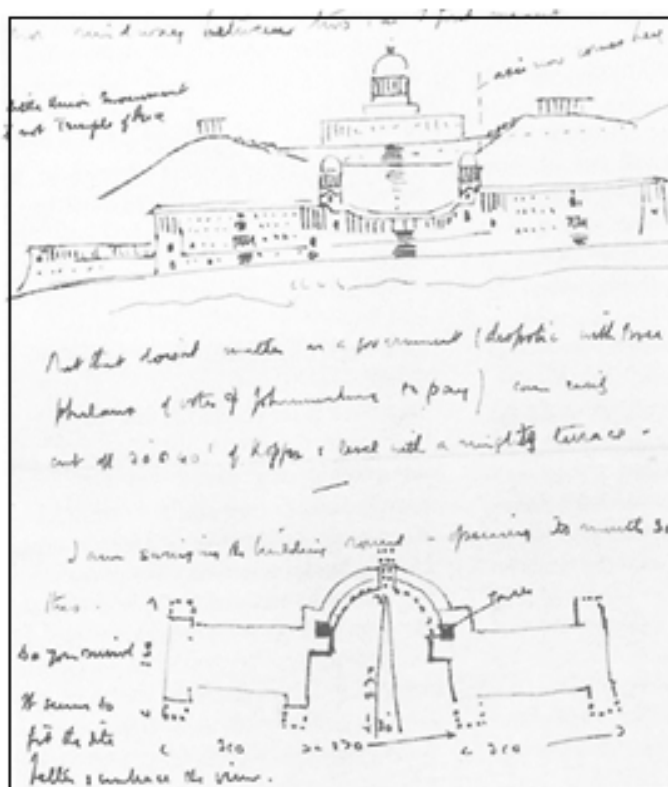
The final phase of colonialism saw Great Britain emerge from the Second World War practically bankrupt and reliant on the USA and some of its own colonies, such as India, that had become creditors rather than debtors. This phase saw the demobilisation of Indians who participated in the Second World War, setting the path for decolonisation of the majority of the empire.

Decolonisation was thus triggered by the change in the world order caused by the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s. The dismantling of structures of control, beginning in earnest in the late 1950s and reaching its high point in the 1960s, was a remarkable historical moment, as country after country gained independence. That so many millions now live in the world formed by decolonisation is one justification for the use of the term postcolonial (Childs and Williams, 1997: 1).

The Southern African region experienced a more complex colonial situation with settler colonialists that eventually gave rise to the racist colonial regimes of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. The settler colonial system had a more lasting impact on the traditional built environments of the region and gave rise to current colonial architecture. The colonial period in tropical Africa lasted about 70 years. The first ten years of this period can be called the years of establishment, the next 30 may be

referred to as the years of active development and the final ten can be called the years of retreat (Oliver and Atmore, 1994: 124).

Public architecture and the design of civic spaces in particular is the mainstay of identity conceptualisation and has been used to its fullest advantage by politicians throughout history (Abel, 1997; Vale, 1992). The identity of the colonial masterpiece, the Union Buildings in Pretoria was designed for two nations – the British and the Afrikaners – that had come to a peaceful resolution to coexist. Baker claimed that his design symbolised the reconciliation of the two races of South Africa on equal terms, by which, of course, he meant not whites and blacks but Boer and Briton (Vale, 1992: 69). This occurred at the expense of indigenous African groups.



The expression used was of two symbolically engaging rams that had literally reached a stalemate (Fig. 4.6.1). Emphasising the non-existence of the black population, a building to accommodate its leadership, including chiefs and kings was built on an obscure site within the precinct.

**Fig. 4.6.1: Baker's sketch of the Union Buildings reflecting two rams in a stalemate, implying the union of Afrikaners and the British (Vale, 1992: 70)**

This study aims to contribute to decolonisation processes through the design of a contemporary built environment imbued with local identity and imagery using placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources. The Union Buildings is typical of colonial cultural domination that was expressed through the built environment. The building chosen for its geographical proximity to the location of the case study in comparison with examples in West, Central or East Africa. Also considered were the

English content with respect to influences on the makings of the building as well as the origins of the Ndebele Nation – justification first set out in the delimitation section in Chapter One.

#### **4.6.3 The legacy of colonial rule**

The template of nation states was adopted as a going concern by nationalists and liberation movements across newly independent countries and territories. This was crystallised by centuries of colonial rule such that the incoming liberation movements and nationalists simply took over the countries and territories as they were under colonial rule without questioning the legitimacy of colonial boundaries that gave rise to further conflict post-independence. The countless examples include India/Bangladesh/Pakistan and Zimbabwe itself, where sections of society continue to demand self-rule but are oppressed as the Northern and Southern parts were colonised at different times. This explains the Mthwakazi Nation's demands in the southern regions of the country (Mlotshwa, 4 October, 2016).

These problems stem from the fact that the colonial powers only controlled the upper levels of a centralised administration and left the lower levels made up of a decentralised despotic system to 'native authorities'. After independence, African nationalists captured the upper level and for the most part retained decentralised despotism at the lower one, justifying this practice by recourse to nationalist ideology. The denial-driven nationalism of earlier days was thus converted into an authoritarian doctrine in support of the powers that be. In many instances this was a rather rapid process; the leader who had only recently been a freedom fighter turned into a dictator as soon as he came to power (Rothermund, 2006: 46).

This was the case in most African countries where chiefs and headmen have been infused into the despotic systems of the former liberation movements-turned rulers of post-independence states.

The nation state demands nation-building and this was not the case in most formerly colonised states. As argued by some politicians, once a nation has been born, citizens who feel that they belong have to be built (Rothermund, 2006: 245). A sense of



belonging creates a common cause and citizens that value their diversity, and cultural and historical backgrounds. This makes it easier to accept diversity in the imagery of built environments that reflects consumers' diversity.

The constitutions of many formerly colonised countries bear the stamp of decolonisation because they were formed with a view to facilitating the transfer of power. Since the devolution of power implied the prescription of administrative procedures, colonial constitutional documents often contain a great deal of contingent detail, whereas 'normal' constitutions are restricted to statements of fundamental rights and basic principles (Rothermund, 2006: 245). To give credence to this statement, the Lancaster House Constitution of 1979 that ushered in Zimbabwe's independence stipulated that the House of Assembly was to consist of 100 members elected as follows:

1. 80 members elected by voters on the Common Voters Roll;
2. 20 members elected by voters on the White Voters Roll. (Lancaster House Constitution, 21 December, 1979: 27 – 28)

The white minority constituted only 5% of the population. The reserved seats were abolished in 1987.

Western education as a formal system of instruction has been one of the most important and enduring elements of the colonial legacy. Local traditions were scorned and scoffed at by the colonisers, thus producing so-called 'natives' that were "native in blood only but colonial in every other respect" (Rothermund, 2006: 250). This mentality had a profound impact not only on post-colonial nationals' way of life, but on the built environment; hence the quest to obtain redress through a search for more representative symbols of localness.

Other legacies of colonialism include:

- Legal systems and bureaucracies
- Military organisation
- Public health and population growth
- Migration and urbanisation
- Lifestyles and sports.

(Rothermund, 2006: 252 – 257)

All of these factors influence how built forms are conceived. The bylaws in most urban centres are directly influenced by Eurocentric ways of perceiving and conceiving space. For example, population growth meant that more housing and services were required. It also called for the provision of public amenities, including civic outdoor spaces. Migration and urbanisation have highlighted these needs. The colonial legacy has also visibly influenced many people's lifestyles (Rothermund, 2006:256), including mannerisms, dress, socialisation, etc., creating a gulf between the haves and have-nots. It impacts on built environments with respect to the quality of public amenities and civic spaces provision with the upper class identifying more with the former colonial masters' way of life.

#### **4.6.4 African colonial public squares**

Colonialism was a way of life and was therefore reflected in built form, especially in civic spaces. South Africa experienced the worst form of colonisation and is therefore an apt place to identify examples of colonial civic spaces. Church Square in the capital, Pretoria is in the historic centre of the city. The founder of Pretoria, Marthinus Pretorius declared that the square should be used as a church yard and market place. It was surrounded by various church buildings from 1856 to 1905 ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church\\_Square,\\_Pretoria#History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Square,_Pretoria#History)). As noted previously, civic spaces, particularly squares, are created as release spaces and are usually surrounded by important civic buildings. In an urban setting, they showcase the city's built form. Church Square was delimited by key civic buildings such as the Old Chambers, the General Post Office, Old Capital Theatre, and the Palace of Justice, to name but a few (Plate 4.6.2).

The republican system of government in the Transvaal after 1852 was an extension of traditional forms of government which arose during the Great Trek. In 1844, the "Drie-en-dertig Artikels" (Thirty-three Articles), also called the Potgieter Constitution, were adopted by the Voortrekkers in the region north of the Vaal River (Labuschagne, 1981: 3). These were to be influential in the formation of a united Voortrekker Nation governed by a Volksraad (Legislative Assembly) which sat annually to deliberate on state affairs.

The founding of Pretoria in 1856, through the efforts of Comdt. Gen. M. W. Pretorius, was a culmination of political machinations within and outside of various Voortrekker groups (*ibid*). Potchefstroom was previously the capital where the Legislative Assembly first met in 1849. At this time, the Legislative Assembly was held alternatively between Potchefstroom and Pretoria. As there was no Volksraad building in Pretoria, the house of President M. W. Pretorius on Church Square, on the site where the Palace of Justice now stands, was used as a venue in 1857 whenever the Volksraad assembled in Pretoria (*ibid*).



**Plate 4.6.2: Aerial photo – Church Square (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 14:00)**

Church Square was a focal point early in the life of the town. From the time Pretoria was established as a town, site 412 on Church Square, where the former Raadsaal stands today, was evidently earmarked as the site for a government building, since no private buildings had been erected (Labuschagne, 1981: 4).



**Plate 4.6.3: The Verenegde Kerk building (1885-1905) was the third to grace the Square (Google, accessed 23/4/18)**



**Plate 4.6.4: View to the north of Church Square towards the old ZAR Legislative Building (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 16:00)**

The name Church Square was adopted due to the ‘proliferation’ of church buildings around the Square with the Verenegde Kerk being the third to grace the site in 1885 (Plate 4.6.3). The importance of the market is also shown with wagons holding farm produce. Plate 4.6.2 shows the square in its current form with the view towards the old ZAR Legislative building. The importance of the Square is indicated by its historical significance in the colonial sense with the British and the Afrikaners taking turns to occupy it from its inauguration. Three significant events took place in the Square that firmly placed it in the history of the Old and the New Republics:

- Paul Kruger was sworn in as President of the Republic on the balcony of the Raadsaal in 1893;
- The Union Jack was hoisted in the Square in 1900 after Pretoria’s surrender to the British forces;
- The proclamation of the Union of South Africa that brought all the country’s colonies into a single entity was read from the balcony in 1910.

(Labuschagne, 1981: 6)

Statues also adorned the Square, including that of a woman that symbolised freedom from an Afrikaner perspective (Plate 4.6.5). The unveiling of Paul Kruger’s statue was affected by historical developments such as the Anglo-Boer War and was finalised in 1954. The statues were a means of commemorating and affirming the identity of the colonial nation that was being built.





**Plate 4.6.5: The statue of a woman atop the Raadsaal (Labuschagne, 1981: 15)**



**Plate 4.6.6: Paul Kruger's bronze statue was completed in Rome in 1889 and was finally unveiled in 1954 (Google. Accessed 19/04/2018 – 14:37)**

As noted previously, statues of gods were placed in the shrines of the Ashanti Temples, linking communities to their cosmology. Greek gods were similarly placed in Greek temples. The statues in Church Square were about Afrikaner nation building. Yoruba temples were also placed around public squares together with markets (see Fig. 4.4.16 to Fig 4.4.20). In the case of Dagomba homesteads, the communal centre was around the fireplace in the middle of the settlement (Fig. 4.4.22). Statues were placed in small courtyards and they told African stories. Small footpaths lead to these squares. Colonialism introduced major roads leading up to the squares. These examples show how colonialism brought about changes in spatial use and the identity of civic spaces developed by various African communities. The cosmological orientation was altered by the introduction of Christian values that are essentially Eurocentric.

The following sub-section explores the critical phenomenon of existential theory. Colonialism created part of what exists in African landscapes and the restoration of pre-colonial values with respect to built forms will have to take this into consideration as a new trajectory is formulated.

#### **4.6.5 Existentialism and the decolonisation agenda**

At this point it is worth considering one more key theory – existential theory. The pre-colonial and colonial epochs provide a starting point from which proponents of decolonisation of African built environments can begin to intervene in a manner that will reinvent and reposition the Afrocentric developmental agenda in a new trajectory.

It is argued that a sustainable decolonisation process must consider what currently exists. Erasing the colonial legacy is not an appropriate response. This history exists; what is required is to change its trajectory bearing in mind the pre-colonial condition – a synthesis approach. To achieve this, the study turns to existentialism – consideration of the African in the twenty-first century.

A human being's existence is embedded in concern for itself. Kierkegaard (in Cooper, 1990: 3) contends that the individual not only exists but is “infinitely interested in existing”. This supports the concept of a centre in which the focus is self. In constructing a centre, the focus would be what Kierkegaard argues is an existing individual that is constantly in the process of becoming (*ibid*). Constantly becoming takes on board the experiential angle of being.

In architecture and urban design, existentialism is considered as built forms that exist and are taken as reality under specific conditions; not as something that one is longing to create. They are there and are current. The built form that exists is predicated to accommodate human existence that determines the development of a given place. Current conditions are therefore considered in any conceptual development. In an Afrocentric sense, the psychological orientation of the creator of built form is such that it is anchored in a collective centre driven by the African existence as a unified collective. A place is therefore informed by the conscious centre of an African existence. This psychological approach would cause the architect or urban designer to respond and consider the site analysis of a place from an African perspective although they are dealing with an existing colonial built environment. The design will then be within the objective reality of the place.

The decolonisation agenda discussed in the next section would be driven by this line of thought.

This sub-section presented a brief background on colonisation processes in the political and social spheres. However, colonisation also affected how built environments were developed in colonised territories.

Having lived under European subjugation for more than a century, Africans were and still are struggling to find their centre as part of identity construction. Colonisation stripped the African of his/her identity. Identity in this case can be considered to be what is central, real, and typical to something or someone (Hague, 2005: 5). This study considers an African as a social animal, just like any other human being, with his/her own centre. The challenge for built environment professionals is to design built environments that are more reflective of the peoples of formerly colonised countries as part of decolonisation processes. This process would be driven by acceptance of what exists. Existential analysis of the place would drive the decolonisation of the built environment. The following section examines the decolonisation process using the theory of existentialism.

#### **4.7 THE AFRICAN DECOLONISATION NARRATIVE AND SPATIAL IMPERATIVES**

Colonialism deprived the colonised of their social and economic identity and that with respect to built forms. It is thus necessary to define and contextualise decolonisation.

##### **4.7.1 Defining decolonisation**

The context of decolonisation can be summarised in the following categories:

- Disintegration of the world economy
- The changing dynamics of world affairs after World War II
- The rise of nationalism and resistance to colonial rule
- Afro-Asia solidarity and non-alignment; and
- The mandate and trusteeship: From the League of Nations to the United Nations (Rothermund, 2006)

This study focuses on the first three as they impact directly on place and traditionality, which is the projected source of placemaking elements. The last two categories touch on more amorphous issues that apply to countries that do not have a common history with the case study location.

Decolonisation as a word entered into usage in the 1930s and was probably fuelled by the World Wars that raised expectations with regard to self-determination and independence. The term was coined by German scholar Moritz Julius Bonn (Rothermund, 2006:1). Since then decolonisation has become a work-a-day, rather like other 'de' prefixed words that denote cleansing changes. Decolonisation, as a word, has thus been applied to the act or the concept of (anticolonial) cleansing (Kennedy, 2003: 2).

Generally, theorists define decolonisation as the process of release from being a colony or granting independence (Rothermund, 2006). The critical issues are why, how and when this action was taken.

The decolonisation process has taken various forms depending on the particular country or former colonial territory. Rhodesia was granted independence in 1965 and majority rule was achieved in 1980. Decolonisation involves a series of political acts, occasionally peaceful, often confrontational, and frequently militant, by which territories and countries dominated by Europeans gained their independence (Betts, 2004: 111).

This raises the question of whether the European colonial empires were overthrown or collapsed under their own weight, with political and social unrest, economic exploitation and cultural disaffection continuing to dog formerly colonised territories. It also poses the question of whether decolonisation is an incomplete or failed exercise (Betts, 2004: 1). It is against this background that this study examines how built environments could be part of the process of decolonisation in the African context with a focus on Bulawayo and its environs.

Decolonisation did not occur in a vacuum, but was driven by political and economic dynamics.



#### 4.7.2 The context of decolonisation

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?  
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,  
in that grey vault. The sea. The sea  
has locked them up. The sea is history.  
(The Sea is History, Walcott, 1987 in Wisker, 2007: 1)

This poem highlights the colonisers' destruction of the history of the colonised. It raises the need to reconstruct lost treasures, including the built environment. The bedrock of colonisation was its projection of European superiority and the need to control global economic resources.

The disintegration of the global economy during the period 1914 to 1945 precipitated decolonisation. This period was marked by the sequence of war – depression – war. Before 1914, the dominant countries were linked in an unofficial global economic alliance based on the gold standard. During the so-called 'golden age', its unofficial capital, the City of London (Rothermund, 2006: 41), was the central clearing house for all major transactions and ensured an uninterrupted flow of gold. This helped to secure the British Empire even though the majority of British investment was made outside the empire (ibid).

Due to the unofficial nature of this alliance, monetary policy was not adopted to support the gold standard and prices were automatically adjusted by the international flow of gold (ibid). Prices thus rose in the country that attracted gold and declined in those that exported it. If a country that attracted gold hoarded it in order to maintain price stability, this upset the balance. According to Rothermund (ibid), this is exactly what the USA did after the First World War. Great Britain emerged from this war heavily indebted to the USA as well as its people, preventing it from reaping the gains of being the capital of clearing houses.

Other nations' attempts to revive the gold standard after World War I failed. The situation was exacerbated by the Great Depression, which resulted in a scramble for survival, with some countries defaulting on debt repayments. Colonial governments could not default or manipulate their currencies as they were controlled by their imperial masters. Prices of raw commodities fell during the Great Depression. This

prompted the colonisers and their administrators in metropolitan centres to devise other means to exert power over their subjects. It took the form of control of the value of currencies on the world market. The weaker the value of the colonised countries and territories' currencies, the cheaper it would be to buy their commodities. This resulted in economic hardship among the colonised that ignited the struggle for self-rule.

The Second World War resulted in a different set of complications. The millions of colonial soldiers that defended the imperial powers were demobilised and returned to their home countries. Having been trained in modern warfare, their allegiance could not be taken for granted.

This war also altered credit relationships between the imperial powers and their colonies. For example, India, which had been kept on a tight leash by the British as it was a substantial debtor, emerged from the war as a creditor of Great Britain (Rothermund, 2006: 42). This hastened the granting of independence and India was left with the burden of providing for the welfare of its demobilised soldiers, one that the British gladly relinquished. Furthermore, the Second World War left European countries heavily indebted to the USA, which also financed their post-war reconstruction efforts. The overall effect was that all odds were stacked against the Europeans, resulting in the granting of independence to more countries and territories.

The period from 1945 to 1975 witnessed the emancipation of the majority of former colonies. From 1945 to 1948, Japanese rule was terminated in East Asia, South Asia was decolonised by the British and the Philippines by the Americans. At the same time, the Dutch and the French returned to their colonies in Southeast Asia and post-war imperialism emerged in Africa (Rothermund, 2006: 43).

The Cold War was driven by America's fear of Communism. American policies in this regard were driven by two somewhat contradictory imperatives, to decolonise so as to reduce potential targets for Russian propaganda and to establish and maintain military bases across the world.

Generally, the rise and fall of commodity prices impacted on the acquisition or disposal of colonial territories. For example, commodity prices rose during the Korean War. The fall of commodity prices led to a slowdown in decolonisation.

Rothermund (2006) states, that the 1970s marked the end of decolonisation in most parts of the world. This implies that this term only refers to the political independence of formerly colonised countries and territories. The author is of the view that this is not the case, as decolonisation of the mind is also necessary. This includes people's worldview, lifestyles, etc. This form of decolonisation should be reflected in the built environment. Val Plumwood (in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 381) contends that different cultures subscribe to different notions of land ownership (read built environments) and that this is reflected in the naming and interpreting of land and telling its story in ways that show a deep and loving acquaintance with it and a history of dialogical interaction.

Plumwood (in Hillier and Rooksby, 2005: 383) adds that colonial modes of naming the land normally reflect colonial relationships, and a politics which is often blatantly incorporative as well as a monological mode of relating.

Humankind's relationship with the land is driven by the human spirit that creates familiarity and connection to a place. Nationalism is a hybrid ideology which varies from right-wing chauvinism to a radical quest for self-determination (Rothermund, 2006: 44). The imperialists projected their nationalism through corporate solidarity driven by a common national interest, acquiring countries and territories. Ironically, nationalists and liberation movements also adopted corporate solidarity as a key driver of the struggle for self-determination. Cultural resources and iconic historical figures were drawn on to achieve such solidarity. In Zimbabwe for example, nationalists invoked historical figures like Inkosi uLobengula, Ambuya Nehanda and Sekuru Kagubi to infuse spirituality and heroic resistance to imperialist rule. The symbolism of Great Zimbabwe carried through to the renaming of the country as a form of conceiving national identity. The rhetoric of national agitation provided a fertile ground for reconstructed traditions and nation-building (Rothermund, 2006: 45).

The following sub-section discusses decolonisation through the built environment.

#### 4.7.3 Decolonisation processes' impact on built form

Decolonisation of built environments can be viewed from two perspectives:

- one driven by various Western interests premised on the development agenda as a basis for responding to local contexts; and
- one that deliberately pursues local responses through consideration of local traditions and culture.

The first approach predominated just after independence in most African countries, primarily in the second half of the twentieth century, while the second is on-going through a synthesis of Western influences and traditional value systems or solely local culture and values.

For the purposes of this study, decolonisation is considered to be a social phenomenon. The study aims to analyse how architecture and built form contributed to this process. It was observed that architecture has not made a meaningful contribution to decolonisation in Bulawayo and its environs. This raises the question of how placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources could be employed as inspiration for the design of contemporary civic spaces in Mthwakazi's Bulawayo. The discussion begins with an overview of how this process has been carried out elsewhere on the African continent.

No word better captures the hopes and ambitions of Africa's leaders, its educated populations, and many of its farmers and workers in the post war decades than 'development' (Herz, 2015: 9). In general, decolonisation processes have championed an agenda disguised as development and modernism. Independence in Africa offered the promise of 'development' that would raise these countries to the same level as others around the world. Given that infrastructure was an essential element of such development; architecture played a critical role.

Modernism in architecture is often posited in contrast to local traditions and is thus not grounded on the *genius loci* – it involved the internationalisation of built environments. Most of the schools that taught this architectural philosophy were located in the Western world; they hence perpetuated colonialism in Africa. Due to the lack of

university courses on engineering and architecture, it was virtually impossible for the local population to study these subjects (Herz, 2015: 11). Newly independent African states' pursuit of development and modernism resulted in the production of built environments championed by non-African architects and other built environment professionals. The Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) is a good example. He subsequently influenced the forms that were adopted by the architect as he requested that they reflect traditional African homesteads thus inadvertently invoking symbolic interactionism and existentialism.

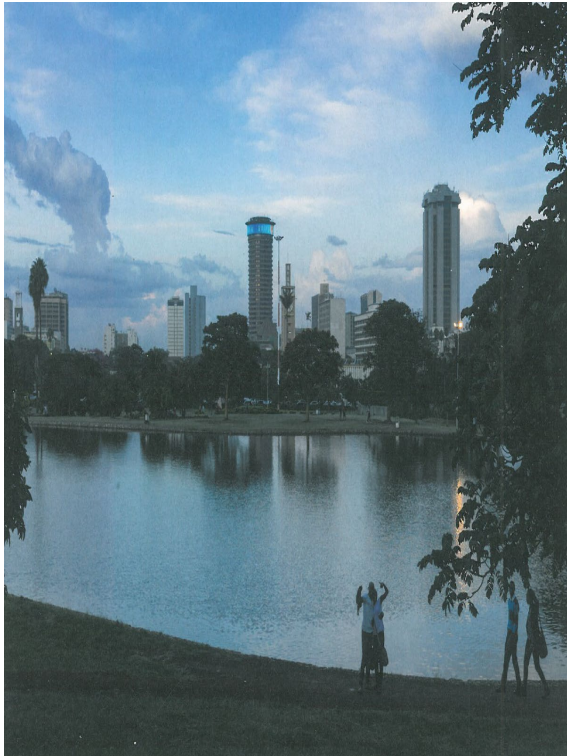
At the advent of independence, then President of the newly independent state of the Republic of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, decided to build the headquarters of the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), in the centre of Nairobi. This project was carried out by the Ministry of Public Works and the head of the architectural department, David Mutiso, appointed a young and creative architect Karl Henrik Nostvik who had recently joined the Ministry under the Norwegian Agency for Development (Herz, 2015: 432).



**Plate 4.7.1: South Entrance, showing the square in front of the building (Herz, 2015: 432)**



**Plate 4.7.2: Approaching the KICC from the north, the main public plaza is in front of the main entrance (Herz, 2015: 433)**



**Plate 4.7.3: (Left) View of the city centre from Uhuru Park, with the KICC Tower dominating the Nairobi cityscape (Herz, 2015: 433)**



**Plate 4.7.4: (Above) The KICC exudes a truly tropical ambience at dusk (Herz, 2015: 436 - 437)**

Nostvik's preliminary designs included a 13-floor tower, large plinth and small auditorium. The design concept was based on a flower with the open and closed blossoms represented by the top of the tower and the auditorium, respectively (ibid) (Plates 4.7.2; 4.7.6 and 4.7.7).



**Plate 4.7.5: (Top Left): The Amphitheatre is named after the Architect, Karl Henrik Nostvik (Herz, 2015: 441)**



**Plate 4.7.6: (Top): The entrance area consists of ramps, galleries, fountains and vertical gardens, creating an interstitial zone between inside and outside (Herz, 2015: 435)**



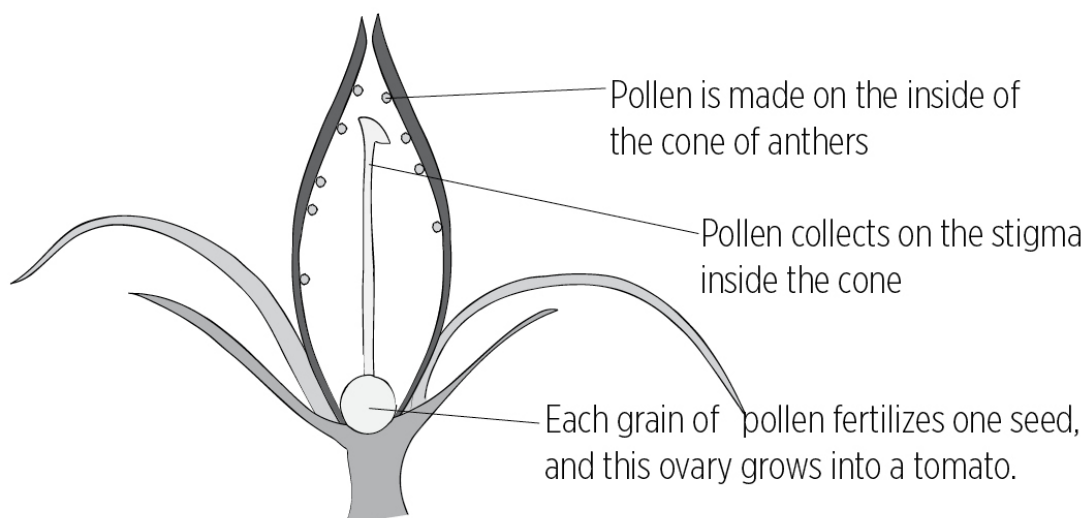
**Plate 4.7.7: (Right): The KICC is an iconic symbol of independence that attracts parties of school children and is also a popular tourist attraction. The plate shows the civic space in front of the main entrance. (Herz, 2015: 440)**

In the midst of the design process, the World Bank decided to host its 1973 annual global conference in Nairobi, the first in Africa, underlining the continent's importance. This was an opportunity for the new political leadership to display its development agenda on a grand scale. The KANU Headquarters was chosen as the venue and it therefore required expansion. Nostvik reworked the design, almost tripling the height of



the tower to 39 floors and expanding the auditorium to host major international events (ibid). Instead of being the KANU Headquarters it was to become the KICC.

The KICC was the tallest building in East Africa for many years and still dominates the skyline of the Nairobi CBD. It has become the icon of Kenya's independence (ibid). It is also a national and international tourist attraction.



**Fig. 4.7.1: The botanical structure of a flower provides an inspiring symbolism for Afrocentricity with respect to sculptural dimension to built form (Google search. Accessed 22/11/2018)**

One could argue that the conceptualisation of the building could have been applied anywhere in the world but a closer consideration of a blossoming flower provided a great opportunity for genius loci especially if it was drawn from the uniquely African flora and fauna.



**Plate 4.7.8: The protea flower that is African and a national emblem for South Africa could be easily linked to the form of the Kenya International Conference Centre (Google search. Accessed 22/11/2018**

The Mau Mau fighters of Kenya contributed immensely to the independence of the country and their cultural artefacts and cosmological stance could have been employed as well. When foreign architects are involved in development projects, there are always additional interests, connotations and implications. Architecture is often used as a vehicle to establish networks or reinforce diplomatic relations. The design is driven by the architect's country of origin and the country where the architect practiced (Herz, 2015: 12).

Nonetheless, one can argue that the forms are drawn from the iconic Serengeti Game Reserve's lush vegetation that blooms at the onset of the rains, symbolising the newly independent state of Kenya. In conjunction with the civic space, the building forms are thus a reflection and expression of personal identity with respect to the African landscape.

The sculptured symbolism of the "African flower" (Plate (4.7.8 and Plate 4.7.9).provides strong pointers as to the direction of Afrocentric placemaking and architecture in contemporary urban built form. Pursued in a creative way Afrocentrism will be the purveyor of a decolonized continent that draws its strength from its genius



loci – its game, it's rivers, mountains, savannah, flora and fauna, above all its peoples and their belief and value systems.



**Plate 4.7.9: Approaching the closed-flower-shaped amphitheatre from the south (Herz, 2015: 441)**



**Plate 4.7.10: The entrance is a series of ramps, galleries, and vertical gardens and fountains that capture the country's tropical environment (Herz, 2015: 434)**

Afrocentric values can therefore be drawn from this analysis. The architect could have been drawn to the flower forms of the natural African savannah with its tropical scenery. This line of thought is supported by the water features and the greenery in public spaces in and around the complex (Plate 4.7.10).

In the context of collective centeredness, the civic square in front of the KICC was placed in such a manner so as to maximise visitors to the newly independent African state that supposedly espoused international values and completely ignored local communal spatial values such as those found in Dagomba, Masaai and other Kenyan communities. It is clear that although the colonisation of Africans has ended, Africans are still mentally subjugated. They have fought the evils of colonisation as an economic and political problem rather than a total conceptual distortion leading to confusion (Asante, 2008: 10). It is against this background that this study aims to contribute to an Afrocentric decolonisation paradigm from an architectural point of view by identifying placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources to inform the design of contemporary built forms.

## 4.8 AFROCENTRICITY AND ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY

Afrocentricity can be defined as a theory of agency, that is, the idea that African people must be viewed and view themselves as agents rather than spectators in revolutions and change (Asante, 2007: 17). To this end, Afrocentricity seeks to examine every aspect of the African subject's place in historical, literary, architectural, ethical, philosophical, religious, economic and political life (ibid). Successful placemaking relies heavily on responding to local lifestyles. The built environment should be an embodiment of such lifestyles, particularly when it comes to civic space. This section investigates the Afrocentric architectural identity as a technique to create place responsive built environments. Two examples are used from South Africa, a country with a similar colonial history to that of Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the founder of the Mthwakazi Nation came from modern-day KwaZulu-Natal. The precedent studies are the Mpumalanga Legislature in Nelspruit that addresses local geographical and social issues and the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg that highlights the global issues of human rights and dignity.

### 4.8.1 Afrocentric Urbanism: The Mpumalanga Legislature, Nelspruit

The dawn of democracy in South Africa impacted many facets of society from the arts, to the social sciences as individuals and communities sought to capture their understanding of what it entailed. One way of understanding the meaning of democracy and freedom in South Africa is through the built environment. Many of those involved sought to redefine what being an African entails and the most appropriate available route was to link the African to his/her natural environment which influenced cultures over the millennia. This approach was reflected in responsive architecture, planning and urban design.

As noted earlier, symbolism has become a powerful tool to link an African to his/her *genius loci*. Symbols are drawn from rivers, mountains, trees, flowers, water bodies, wildlife and ecology and cosmology. The design of civic spaces and buildings offers an opportunity to express the identities of different communities and the country at large. This section examines two buildings in South Africa to examine how Afrocentric values are reflected in the built form.

Mpumalanga is one of the nine new provinces that were created after the advent of democracy in South Africa. The move from four (the Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State) to nine provinces (the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, Limpopo, North West Province and the Western Cape) represented a shift from a highly centralised apartheid state to a unique kind of post-apartheid federalism. It also resulted in the formation of five new political regions, each with legislative and executive arms. Architects were called upon to provide for the practical requirements of new provincial government institutions, as well as symbolic needs (Noble, 17 - 18). The latter have resulted in the construction of territorial identities that are linked to local history, culture, geopolitics, etc.

In Nguni, *mpumalanga* simply means the east where the sun rises. Mpumalanga is characterised by scenic diversity. From the rolling grasslands on the Highveld with its clear sky and crisp air, the terrain drops sharply down South Africa's eastern escarpment to the sub-tropical Lowveld plains with their abundance of wildlife and unspoilt nature as far as the eye can see. Numerous rivers plunge down the cliffs of the escarpment and gush through spectacular gorges and valleys into the plains below, where they wind their way eastward to the Indian Ocean (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 11). These are the natural features that define the *genius loci* of a place.



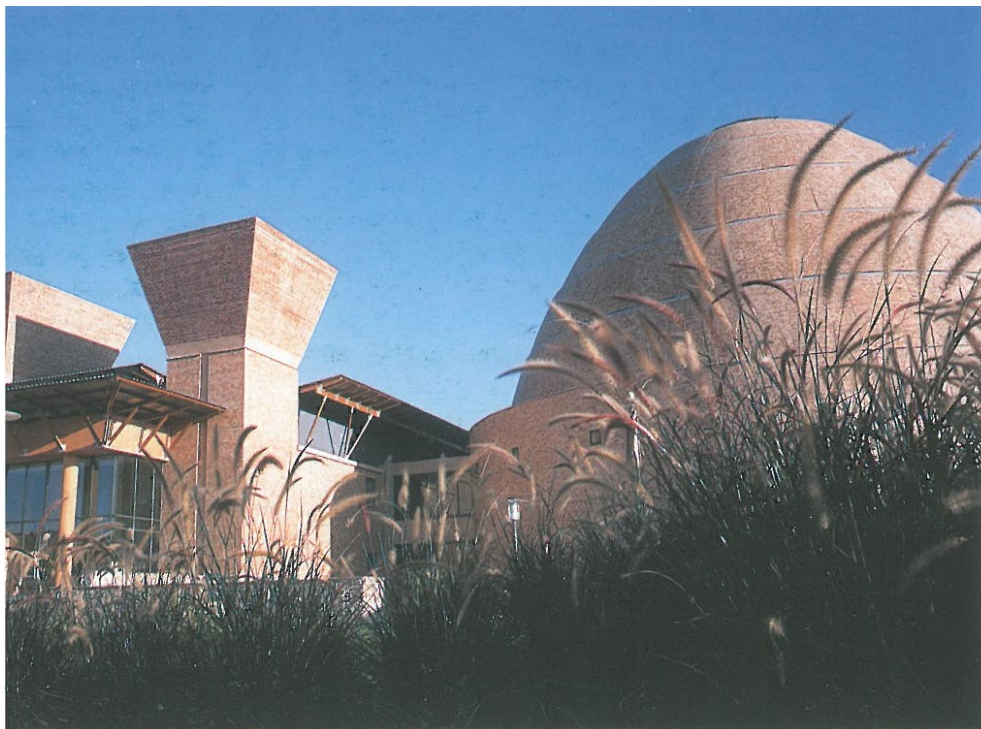
The sweeping covered walkways supported by splayed columns imitating a forest of trees with the familiar rock outcrops seemingly announcing its territory in a symbolic gesture (Fig. 4.8.1).

**Plate 4.8.1: Mpumalanga legislature- view from inside the sweeping forecourt** (Google Search. Accessed 22/11/2018)





**Plate 4.8.2:**  
Granite kopjes in  
the veld around  
Nelspruit (Noble,  
2001: 10)



**Plate 4.8.3:**  
Note the  
similarity  
between the  
dome of the  
Mpumalanga  
Provincial  
Legislature  
building and the  
granite  
outcrops  
(Noble, 2001:  
10)

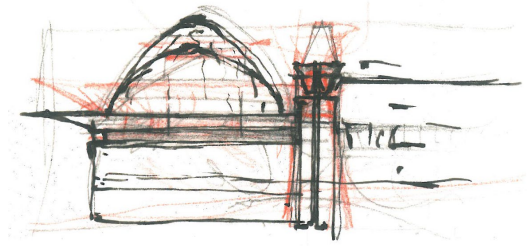
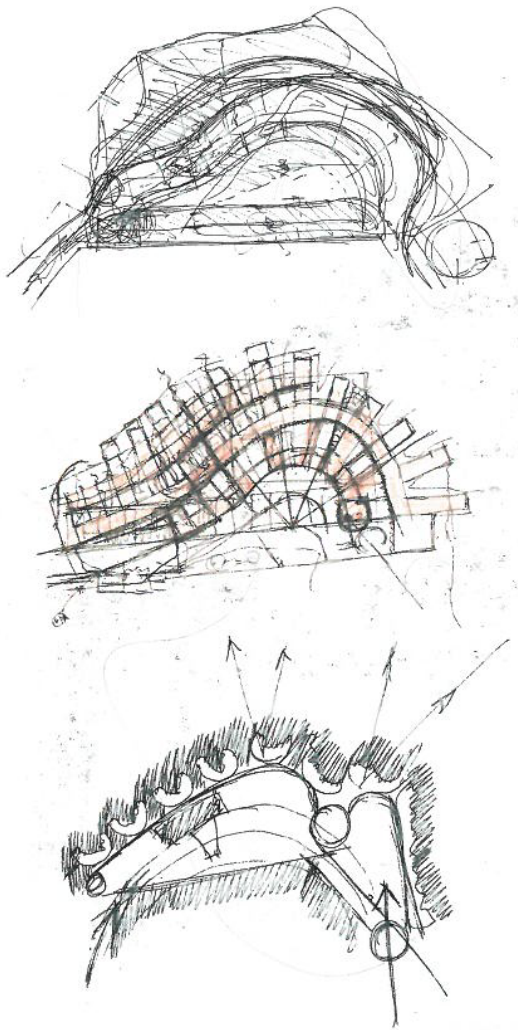
The dome of the new legislature resembles the rock outcrops in and around Nelspruit, creating a sense of belonging (Plates 4.8.1 and 4.8.2).





**Plate 4.8.4: Aerial photograph showing the location of the Mpumalanga Legislature and its position in relation to the Riverside Mall and Casino (Google, accessed: 28/11/2017)**

In the first instance, the location of civic buildings is critical, especially in post-apartheid cities where there was a clear distinction between white and black, rich and poor, and privileged and marginalised, with these dichotomies reflected in apartheid city planning. Thus, new civic buildings or spaces need to bridge the gaps between these extreme social and political elements. It would appear that, besides these considerations, the location was chosen bearing in mind the distance between the city centre and the legislature (Plate 4.8.4). The site, which is worth R21million, was donated by private business, H. L. Hall & Sons in order to promote private investment around the area where their Riverside Mall and Casino currently stand (Noble, 2001: 11 – 12).



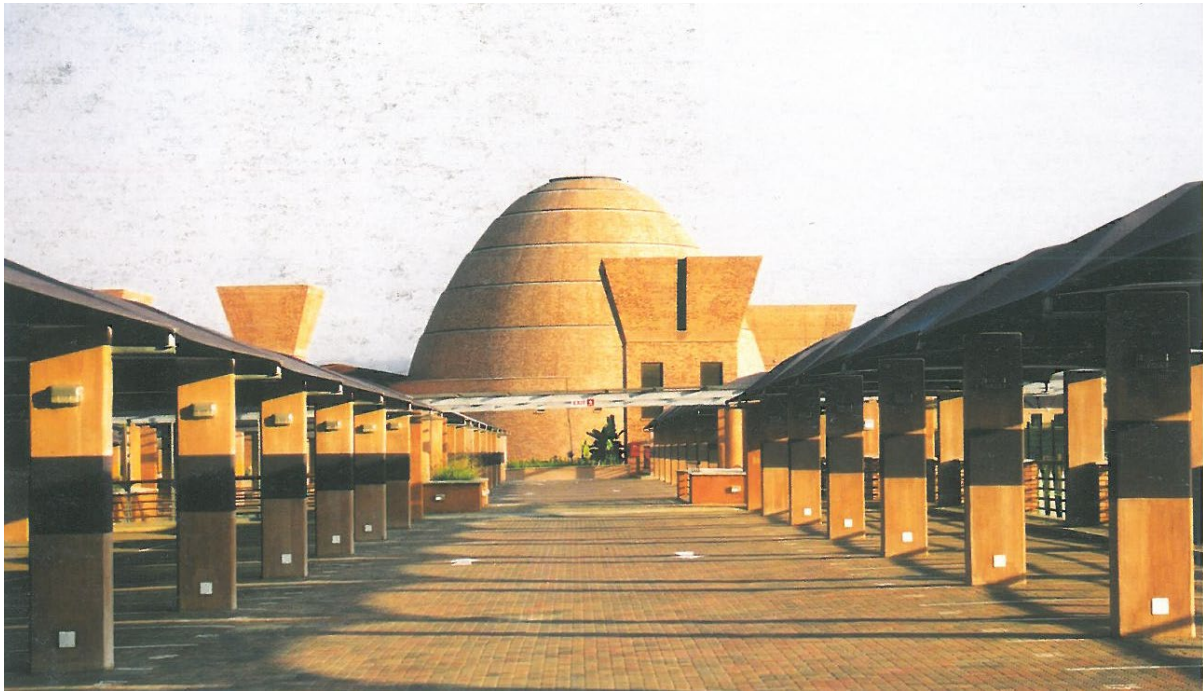
**Fig. 4.8.1: Sketches showing the curved footprint and the early idea of a domed structure**

In searching for local references, the architects also had to consider climatic conditions, and the use of materials to generate the rich textures and ingenious architecture. They revisited the elementary principles of structures, such as a basic dome, and translated these into large-scale modern solutions (Malan and McNerney, 2001: 20). Local artisans were employed to create local flavour.

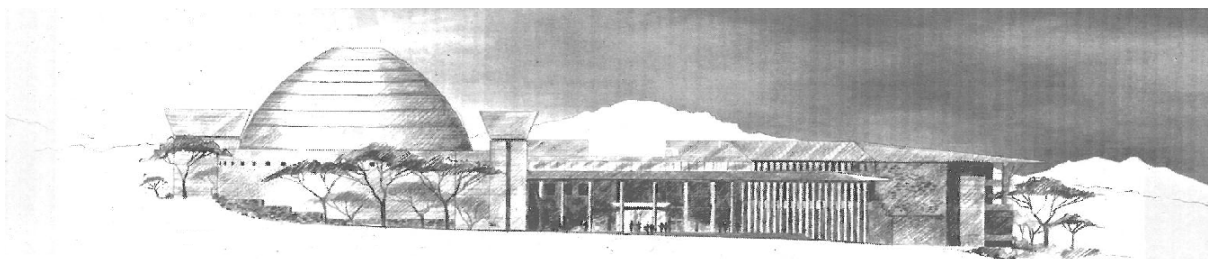
As in the case of the Sydney Opera House, architect Patrick McNerney was trained in Western architectural traditions and inevitably looked at global models and new advances in the field. The challenge was to design for an African environment and his adherence to Luis Kahn's tenet of "let the building be what it wants to be" was critical in striking a balance. Pointers were taken from the surrounding environment, and the



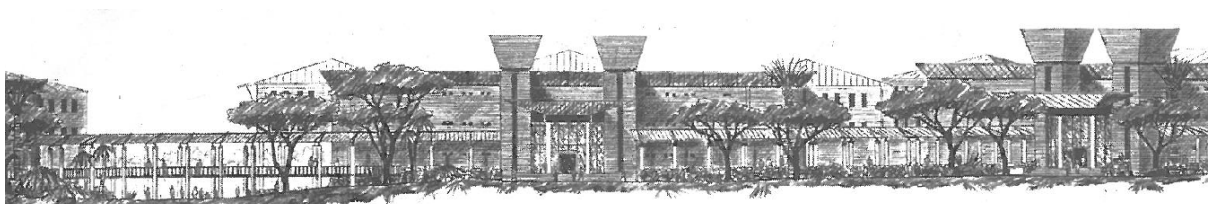
brief, and were developed in an on-going search for cultural expression (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 21). Architects carefully studied the site, including its vegetation, contours, the river and the islands in the river. The conceptual design that emerged was a string of low-slung pavilion-like office buildings that followed the sweeping curve of the tree line, along natural contours (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 24), (Fig. 4.8.1).



**Plate 4.8.5: Shade nets, pergolas, and light wells were useful in integrating parking into the building (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 50)**



**Fig. 4.8.2: Western elevation of the Legislative Assembly (Noble, 2011: 29)**



**Fig. 4.8.3: Part of the long western elevation to the offices (Noble, 2011: 50)**

The architect engaged the surrounding environment as contextual and rational clues for the making of form, and was aware of the social context of the complex at various levels. The building drew on Afrocentric built forms, such as the domed roof of the Assembly that makes reference to indigenous beehive domes and corbelled brick towers that are indirectly reflective of the indigenous architecture of Mali and Egypt (Plate 4.8.5; Figs. 4.8.2 and 4.8.3).

Contextualism on its own is not sufficient in the South African context as it mainly operates at the material level and does not question cultural identity. It thus emphasises materials and existing forms and patterns. Architectural forms become entangled in cultural domination from the past. This calls for imaginative and symbolic references to the existing context. The Mpumalanga Legislature clearly demonstrates the successful execution of symbolic identification with Africa (Noble, 2011: 34).

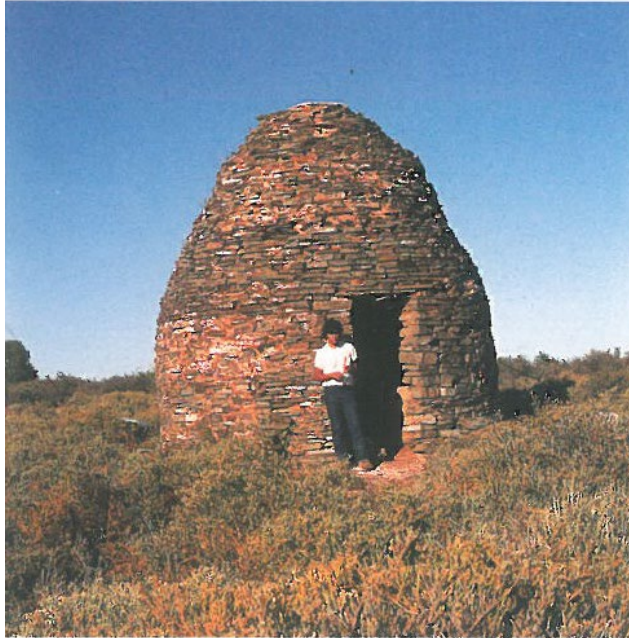
Tectonic sensibilities derived from African buildings and craft traditions add to the symbolic nature of the building. Archaeological discoveries also contributed to the symbolic dimensions of the process. Unearthing and mobilisation of pre-colonial signifiers is a prominent feature of new political imaginary in South Africa; it thus becomes a cog in the identification process (Noble, 2011: 43). During roadworks on the adjacent site in 1997, a bulldozer exposed storage pits, a cattle kraal, and a burial ground and midden. The oldest pits dated back to the early Iron Age, around 550 AD, and contained charcoal, traces of dung lining and shards of pottery (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 12). This provided a historical backdrop for the symbolic nature of the building.

The dome, which is central to the design, was drawn from the granite outcrops that are common in and around Nelspruit and Mpumalanga in general (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75) (Plates 4.8.6 and Fig. 4.8.5 and 4.8.6). It spans the Legislature Assembly, which is the pivotal space both functionally and symbolically, because it is here that leaders gather to discuss issues of governance (Noble, 2011: 38). The parabolic form was used to enhance the acoustic quality of the space. The interior of the building was designed to articulate the symbolic articulation as well as function fit for purpose including acoustic requirements

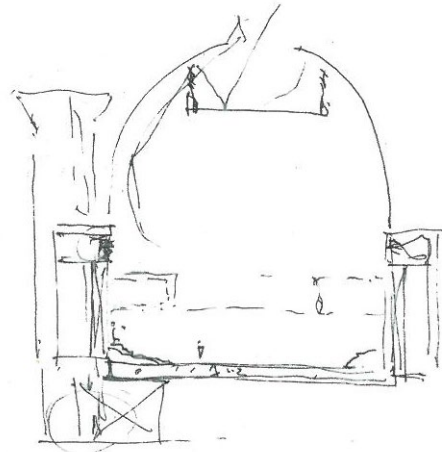




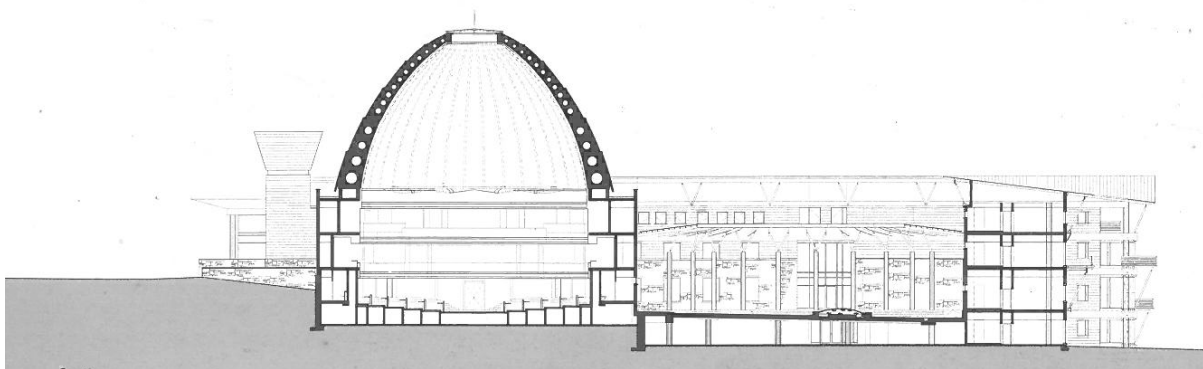
As noted earlier, this idea was conceived early on in the process and anchors the two arched wings, the Executive and Legislature. Initially, the dome lacked Afrocentric qualities as it did not reference the African governance style (See Chapter Three).



**Plate 4.8.5: (left) – Cobelled parabollic stone dome by nineteenth century Karoo settlers (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75)**



**Fig. 4.8.5: Early conceptions of the dome (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75)**



**Fig. 4.8.6: Section through the dome of the Legislature (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 37)**

In pre-colonial times, African elders would meet under a tree to debate political matters and administer justice (Noble, 2011:38 – 39, 119; Law-Viljoen, 2006: 32). This practice has continued to this day. Afrocentric values were incorporated through the planting of trees in the civic square of the Legislature – a symbol of the African court of justice and political and social discourse (Noble, 2011: 39).

As the central feature, the dome was placed on a three-levelled base with a diameter of 28 metres. Much attention had to be paid to the detail of the structure, waterproofing, accoustics, lighting and the finishing of its parabolic shape (Malan and McInerney, 2001: 75). The parabolic is the purest form of load transfer in arched, vaulted and domed structures (ibid). The parabolic dome was adopted due to its structural integrity and both physical and computer generated models were employed as part of the architectural and engineering design.

In conclusion, the architects of this building took on the challenging subject of African architecture, most of which was either obliterated or suppressed by the colonialists. They worked within existing theories and practices of architecture, that is, the Western discourse, but interrupted it with imaginations and practices that were previously rejected (Noble, 2011: 54). Architecture and built form are a reflection of specific lifestyles (Mthethwa, 2011); thus users' value systems and lifestyles need to be examined rather than simply linking to historical forms and spatial relationships. This building as well as the Constitutional Court that is discussed below, presents a consistant theme of Afrocentric identity as addressed by the built environment.

#### **4.8.2 Afrocentric Architecture: The Constitutional Court of South Africa**

The advent of democracy in South Africa stimulated fresh ideas among many built environment professionals. The Constitutional Court is a breath-taking example of how Africans can be agents of their own destiny with respect to built environments. The new Constitutional Court of South Africa, situated on the site of what was a notorious prison under the apartheid regime, is a remarkable feat of architectural daring and hope. It is the realisation of the dream of many of a building in the new South Africa that celebrates the ideals of the country's progressive Constitution, but commemorates the suffering and struggles of the past without being slavishly loyal to history and gives visible form to the belief that all are equal before the law (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 7).

The prison finally closed in 1983 and an eerie silence settled between the high rise buildings of Hillbrow and the leafy opulent suburbs of northern Johannesburg. Despite its notorious history, or because of it, the Old Fort seemed to have all the necessary

qualities for a site that would stand at the junction between South Africa's past and future (ibid). In its life the prison was transited by historical figures such as Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Oliver Tambo, Lilian Ngoyi and Albert Luthuli (Noble, 2011: 116 and Law-Viljoen, 2006: 7). Simply based on its history, an extraordinary piece of architecture was called for that would embody and hold aloft the virtues of a modern democratic state and thus set a trajectory for the new political and social dispensation.

The Fort was a national monument and permission had to be obtained to build on the site from the National Monuments Council (NMC). The City of Johannesburg and the Department of Works appointed three architects, Derek and Vivien Japha from the University of Cape Town and the Johannesburg based practice of Herbert Prins, to develop a brief for an international competition (ibid). The brief began with a vision statement by Jeff Radebe, then Minister of Public Works which emphasised the need to understand the past to identify the network of threads that speak of the nation's pain and triumph ..... "to weave a common consciousness that harmonises the conflicts and hurt of the past with the justice and reconciliation so necessary for the construction of a new society" (Noble, 2011: 119). Constitutional Hill is now a major civic space for Johannesburg and a symbolic place for the nation, where the Constitutional Court and various national human rights institutions are accommodated together with museums of national importance (ibid). According to some commentators, the architecture of the building emphasises the "African imagination" and thus intentionally addresses Afrocentric issues (ibid). Symbolism is evident, beginning with the urban setting of the building.

The Johannesburg Fort was built by Paul Kruger's administration. Strategically chosen for its commanding views of Johannesburg, the site allowed guns to be directed at anyone attempting to seize the city by force (Nobel, 2011: 116). The building of the Constitutional Court on this site sparked vigorous debate on human rights issues. Former President Nelson Mandela described it as a beacon of liberation. The symbolic narrative is that the prison is to the court as injustice is to freedom, as the past will be to a brighter future. This is in line with the the historical context of Bennelong Point on which the Sydney Opera House was built. Both buildings aim to nurture national

identity construction. Constitutional Hill emerged from the ruins of an oppressive institution as as a symbol of human dignity regardless of race or tribe.



**Plate 4.8.7: Children underneath a tree on Constitutional Hill (Google – Accessed 23/11/2017)**



**Plate 4.8.8: Typical meeting space in traditional African communities (Google, accessed 23/11/2017)**



**Fig. 4.8.7: Insignia of the Constitutional Court of South Africa (Noble, 2011: 120)**

Eleven judges from various backgrounds and communities were appointed to judge the design competition for this project. Judge Sachs convened a meeting in his chambers where the brief was presented. He explained the new insignia of the court (Fig. 4.8.6) and what I would call its Afrocentrist nature. He emphasised the Court’s commitment to engage what he termed “African imagination” thus, suggesting justice administered beneath a tree in accordance with African tradition (Noble, 2011: 119), (Plates 4.8.7 and 4.8.8 and Fig. 4.8.7). This notion of justice was echoed by Thenjiwe Mintso who noted that traditionally, justice would be administered in rural areas by elders who would sit under a tree and resolve issues in an imbizo/lekgotla (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 32).



**Plate 4.8.9: The urban context of Constitutional Hill (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 15)**



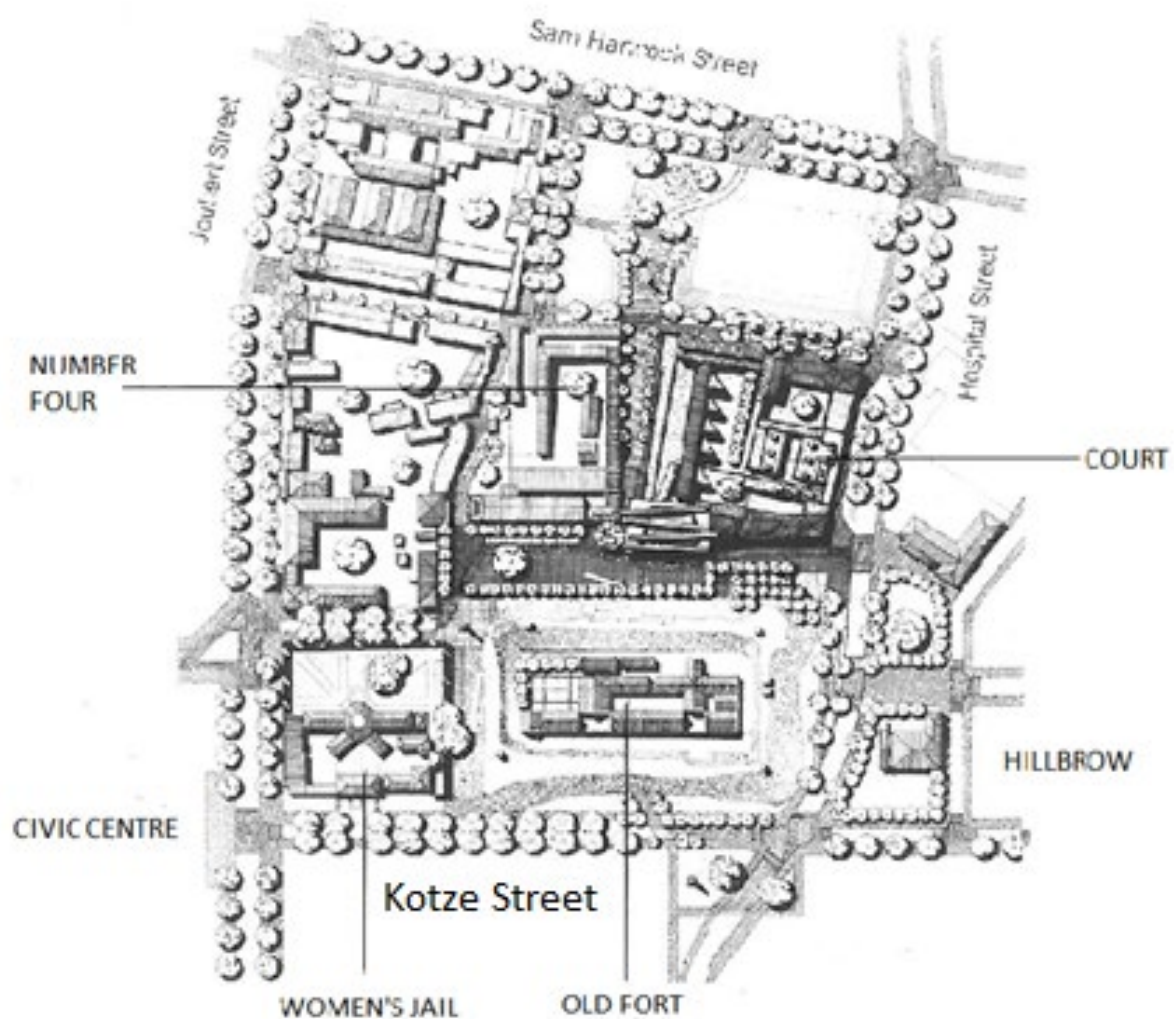


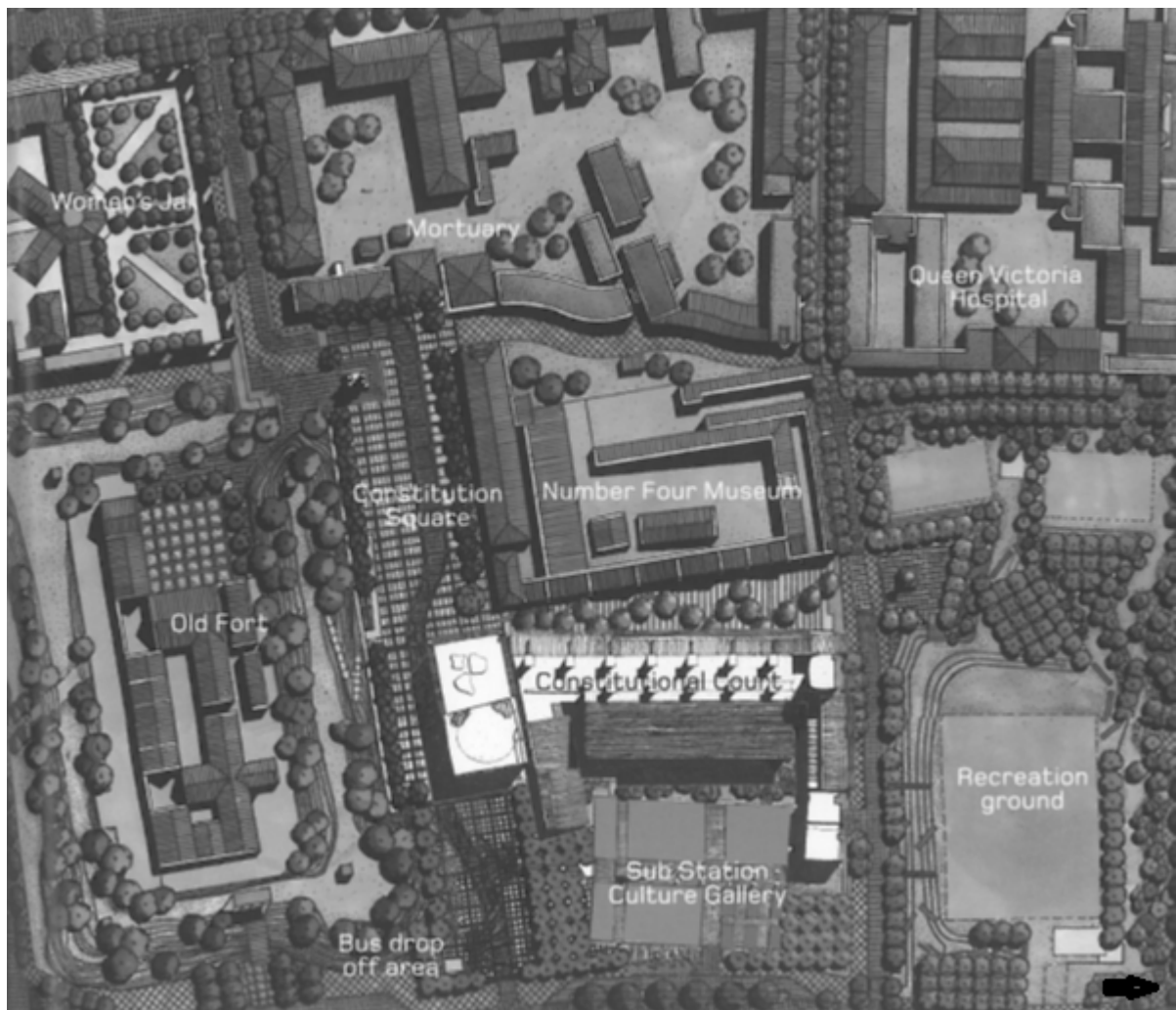
Fig. 4.8.8 Design showing the relationship of the court to the city (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 16)

The site of the Court is appropriate as it is accessible to tens of thousands of people who live within a kilometre. While not a nodal point in the context of the city, it forms an eastern coordinate of an important urban renewal feature (Justice Johann Kriegler in Law-Viljoen, 2006: 16) (Plate 4.8.9).

The tree was interpreted as a counter-symbol of the conventional representation of power in the form of imposing classical facades, figures of judges or blindfolded women balancing scales (Noble, 2011, 120). The three judges that presented the brief envisaged an emotively humane and approachable space of adjudication; hence their insistence on the concept of an “African imagination and justice administred under the

tree with all being equal under the law” (*ibid*). The building was an important renewal feature in that part of the city and has since resulted in substantial local development.

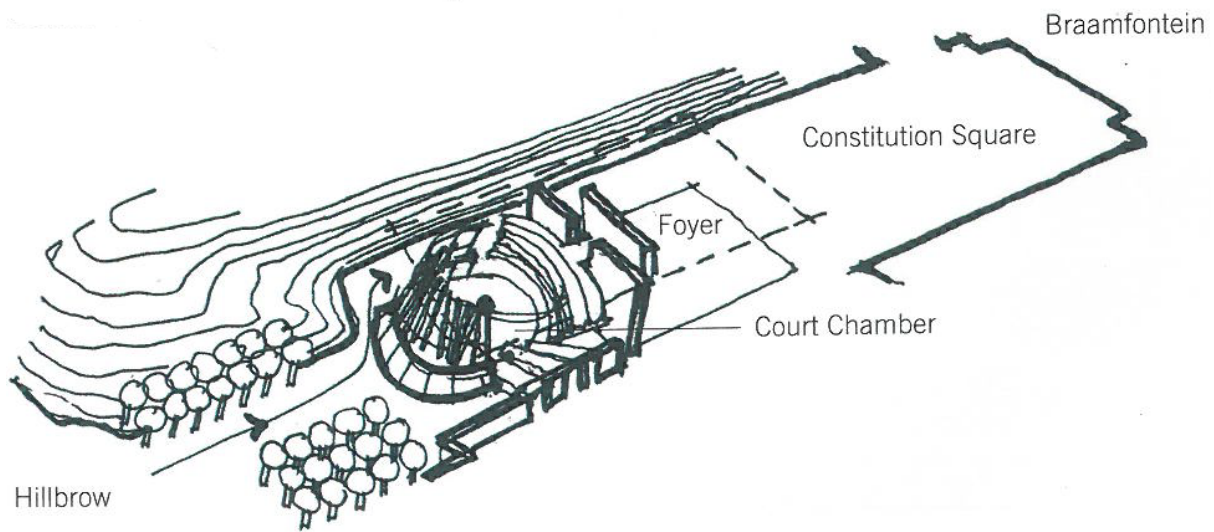
The four final entries that were considered for the international competition included a wide range of building types informed by different conceptions of historical context and different approaches to iconic symbolisation (Noble, 2011: 130).



**Fig. 4.8.9: The site will eventually house the Land Claims Court, the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission and a museum relating to the birth of the Constitution (Penguin, 2006: 95 – 96)**

The winning design was submitted by a consortium of two firms, OMM Design Workshop and Urban Solutions (OMMUS). It was selected due to its richness and references to multiple contexts supported by different iconic expressions and symbolism (Fig. 4.8.8 and Fig. 4.8.9).

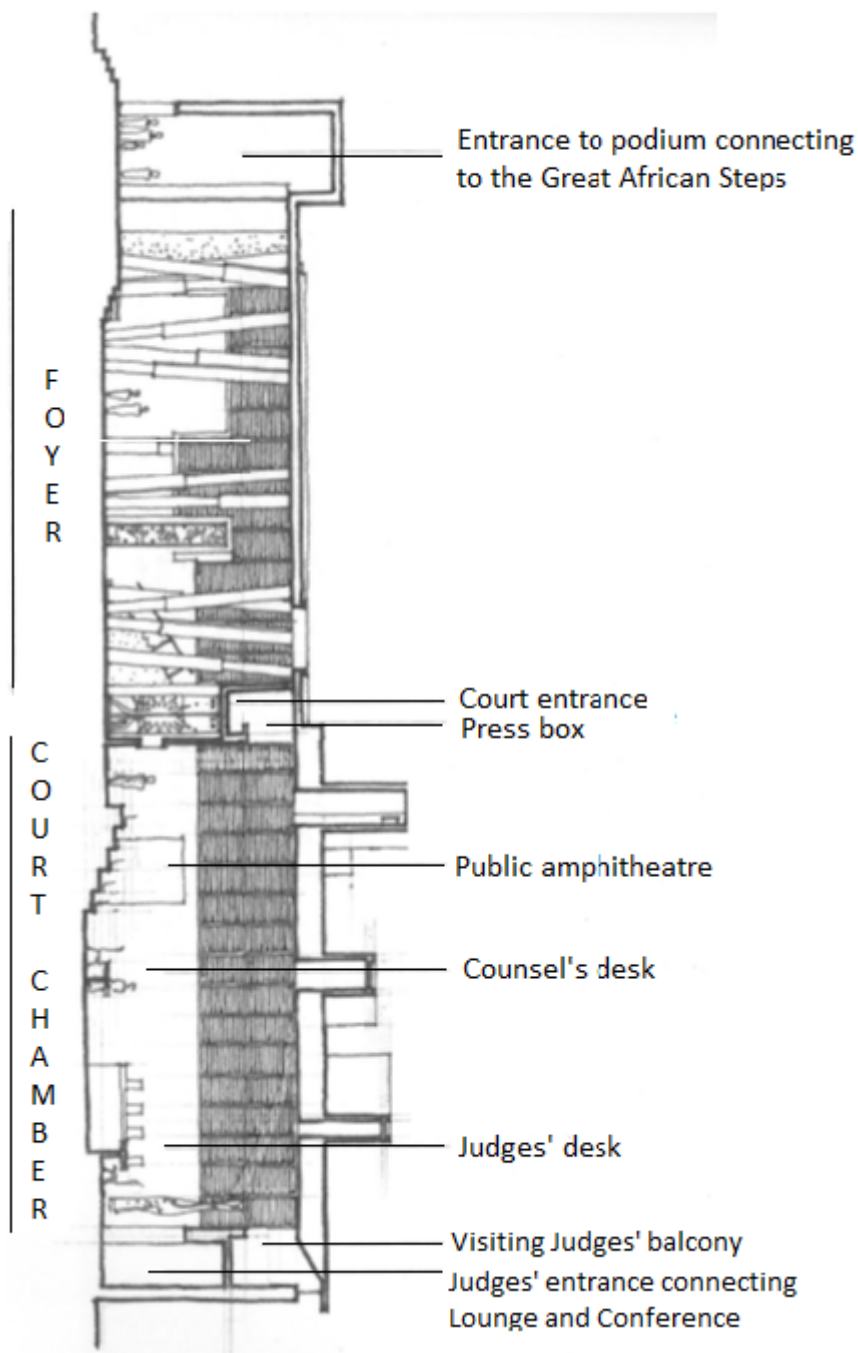




**Fig. 4.8.10: Drawing showing the relationship between the Court and Constitution Square (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 39)**

Faced in transparent and translucent glass, the public foyer and courtroom are in full open view, with direct access from Constitution Square, which serves as the primary public space at the centre. The entrance to the court chamber is via a foyer, which in turn is accessed directly from Constitution Square. The court and foyer are unified by a large parasol roof which projects into Constitution Square, where it provides outdoor shade (Noble, 2011: 132) as an allegoric reference to a tree.

The designers responded to the fundamental tenants of freedom and democracy. Cities can be designed in an exclusive or inclusive manner. Inclusivity implies public urban spaces that welcome ordinary human beings to sit, stand, chat, linger or move on. The urban design strategy for the new Constitutional Court and Constitution Hill involved reintegrating the previously isolated and impenetrable prison precinct into the city grid (Law-Viljoen, 2011 21). This is supported by the studies cited in Chapter Three on the emphasis on “we” over “me”. The powers of the King/Queen rest with his/her people. Without his/her people he/she is nothing. In most traditional societies the King or the Queen was the ultimate administrator of justice. The winning scheme positioned the court firmly on the ground.



**Fig. 4.8.11: Cross-section showing the direct relationship between Constitution Square, the raised entrance podium, the foyer and the sunken well of the Court Chamber (Law-Viljoen, 2006: 63)**

The Court Chamber and foyer are placed in the space left over from the Awaiting Trial Block (Figs. 4.6.10 and 4.6.11). The incorporation of the building's history into the new Court recognises that the Constitutional Court is the outcome of a historical process (Janina Masojada in Law-Viljoen, 2006: 39). The building was designed to reflect this historical process through physical and symbolic reflections.

Accessibility was the key in creating an Afrocentric civic space and this was achieved by designing permeable spaces, linking to the history of the site, incorporation of narratives of the site from those involved in its history and most importantly, grounding the philosophy of the design on African lifestyles – in this case, emulating the administration of justice under a tree and thus re-enacting how justice is traditionally

administered in African society. Afrocentricity was therefore achieved by drawing on symbolic landscape, social and historical qualities.

Constitution Square was designed for people. It creates a sense of collectiveness and draws on African values. Its site was appropriate in that it brought together divided communities. The square thus became a collective centred place. One would consider this to be self-reflection in the sense that the square reflects on the challenges of South African society that has turned its back on the horrors of the past and looks to a promising future of justice and fairness.

#### 4.9 CONCLUSION

In both the built environments discussed in this chapter, the Mpumalanga Legislature and the South Africa Constitutional Court, collective centeredness was emphasised from the conceptual stage, with the Constitutional Court being more successful as it used the stitching concept as a means of bringing communities that were separated by apartheid planning together in a single civic space and thus captured some of the tenets of African spatial qualities around justice.

Having traced developments in placemaking elements from pre- to post-colonial settings, the following chapter focuses on the context and history of Mthwakazi Nation as it is known today. At the onset of colonialism, modern-day Zimbabwe was made up of two territories – Mashonaland and Mthwakazi (Matabeleland and parts of the Midland provinces). The chapter examines the development of civic spaces in these two territories from pre- to post-colonisation.

# **CHAPTER FIVE: IN SEARCH OF MTHWAKAZI'S AFROCENTRIC BUILT FORM IDENTITY: Contextual understanding of Bulawayo (Case study)**

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the background to the study area. It begins by examining the precolonial Shona-centric built forms and associated traditional architecture. This is followed by a discussion on Harare where there is marked colonial and postcolonial architectural developments. The chapter goes on to look at parallel developments in the Mthwakazi territory with a focus on Bulawayo. In both instances, a historical narrative is provided so as to highlight the source of symbolism and sculptural architecture inspiration in these regions.

Storytelling is a rich source of information on most Africans' world view. Myths, stories and proverbs intertwine to present a world view that enables deep understanding of a given community and its culture. Myths explain the why and how of the here and now. A myth has authority because it offers an explanation (Van Baaren in Aspinall, 2000: 49).

Exploration of myths, stories, and proverbs underpins the dynamics that link culture and history to architecture. The architecture created out of the mythological context could be regarded as a 'primal' graphic expression in metaphor, symbol and imagery embodied in people's real socio-cultural context (Aspinall, 2000: 49). A prime example is the Egyptian pyramids whose sheer size was a symbolic expression of the physical world attempting to touch that of the divine. This is part of a people's mythology. Architecture becomes the reference to the mythological time, while the mythologically shaped thinking of a culture and the oral narrative suggest the architectural intent (ibid).

Great Zimbabwe can also be regarded as an attempt to reach out to the gods of the universe with the architecture and the physical landscape aiding such effort. At Great Zimbabwe, the design-talk, could be seen as the symbolic language, the unique and powerful syntax of symbolic forms and their arrangement referring to ancestors and the mythological time (Aspinall, 2000: 50).

Myths, stories and proverbs are used to transmit cultural wisdom to members of society. As true sources of a culture's perspectives, they can be used to explain its thoughts and organisation to an outsider (Aspinall, 2000: 52). The norms that govern social conduct can also be used to bring wayward behaviour into line.

Great Zimbabwe has a huge impact on the psyche of contemporary Zimbabwe. This chapter begins by investigating key Shona-centric placemaking and architectural elements to provide a background to understanding the context in which Mthwakazi architecture should develop.

## 5.2 THE SETTING

As in many countries, Zimbabwe is home to diverse cultural communities. This raises the question of how the government of the day handles diversity and relates to the internal structures of these diverse cultures. Are the mistakes perpetrated under external colonialism being repeated in the twenty-first century? This section investigates the internal social dynamics in the country as well as issues around identity and how these are reflected in the built form. It begins by identifying the communities in precolonial times, followed by the colonial period. Parallel developments in built form are also identified.

The decolonisation section is mostly driven by symbolism issues as a generator of Afrocentric civic spaces.

### 5.2.1 Territorial distribution of tribal communities in 1980

The period before independence in 1980 reflected the precolonial condition with respect to the predominant tribes around the country. This is shown in Fig. 5.2.1. At the onset of colonialism, communities 1, 2, 9 and 10 were part of the Mthwakazi nation as well as some sections of community 3. Community 8, the Ndau (known as *amadingindawo* – those that are looking for a place) are related to Shangani people (community 11) who are part of the Nguni tribes that migrated into Mozambique and South Africa.

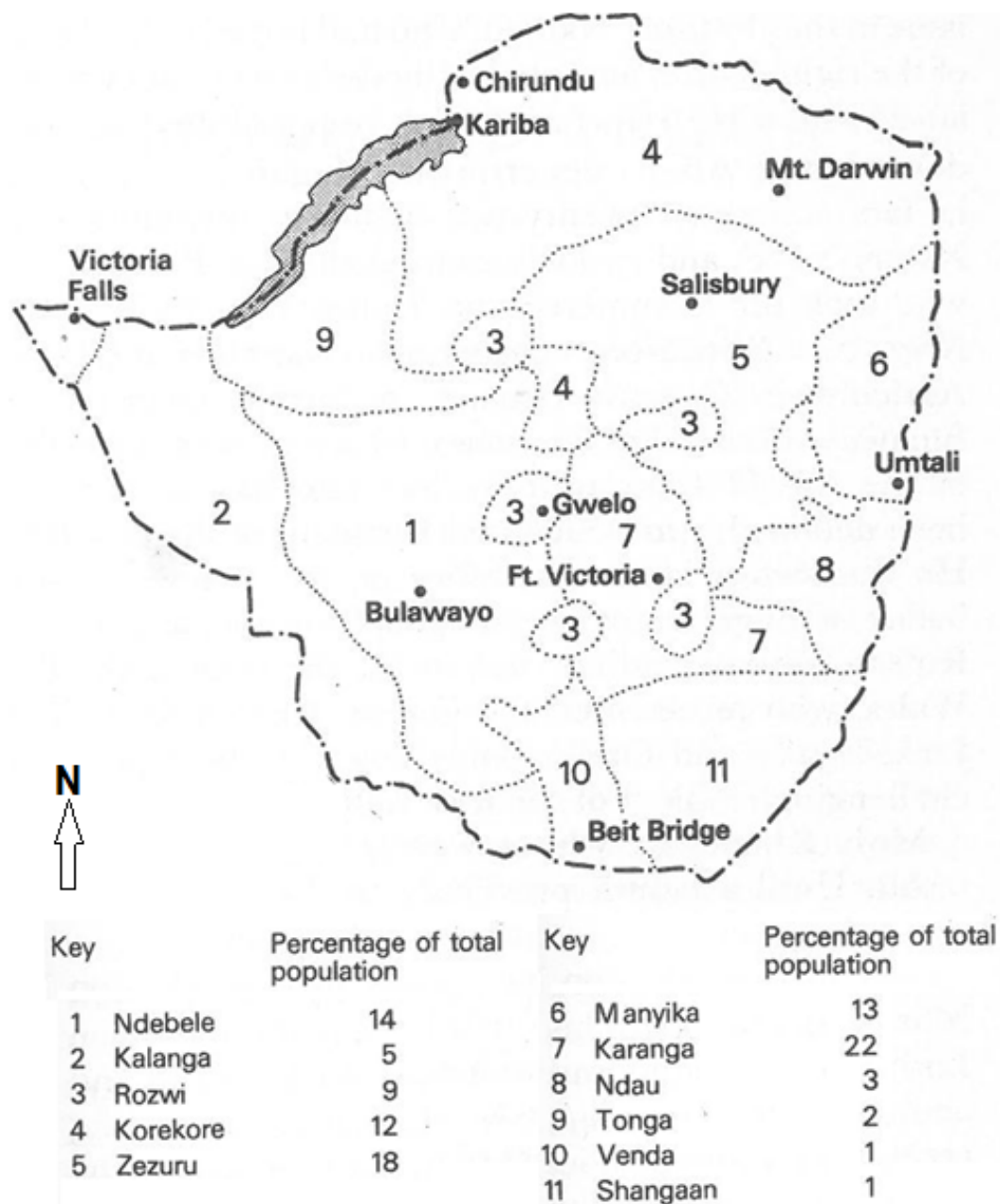


Fig. 5.2.1: Tribal communities' composition and distribution in Zimbabwe in 1980. Note that old names are used in this illustration (Wills, 1985: 453)

Mthwakazi tribes are mainly found in the south-western part of the country. They include the Ndebele, Kalanga, Lozvi/Rozvi, Nambya, Venda and Tonga. This study focuses on Shona and Ndebele traditional architecture.

### 5.2.2 Shona architecture

African traditional architecture is structured around villages in what is termed *musha* in Shona. The term can also be interpreted as a home. Generally, the orientation of a *musha* is west and is usually in the direction of prevailing winds. The formal approach to the homestead is also predominantly from the west where visitors can be seen as they approach (du Toit, 1981: 5).

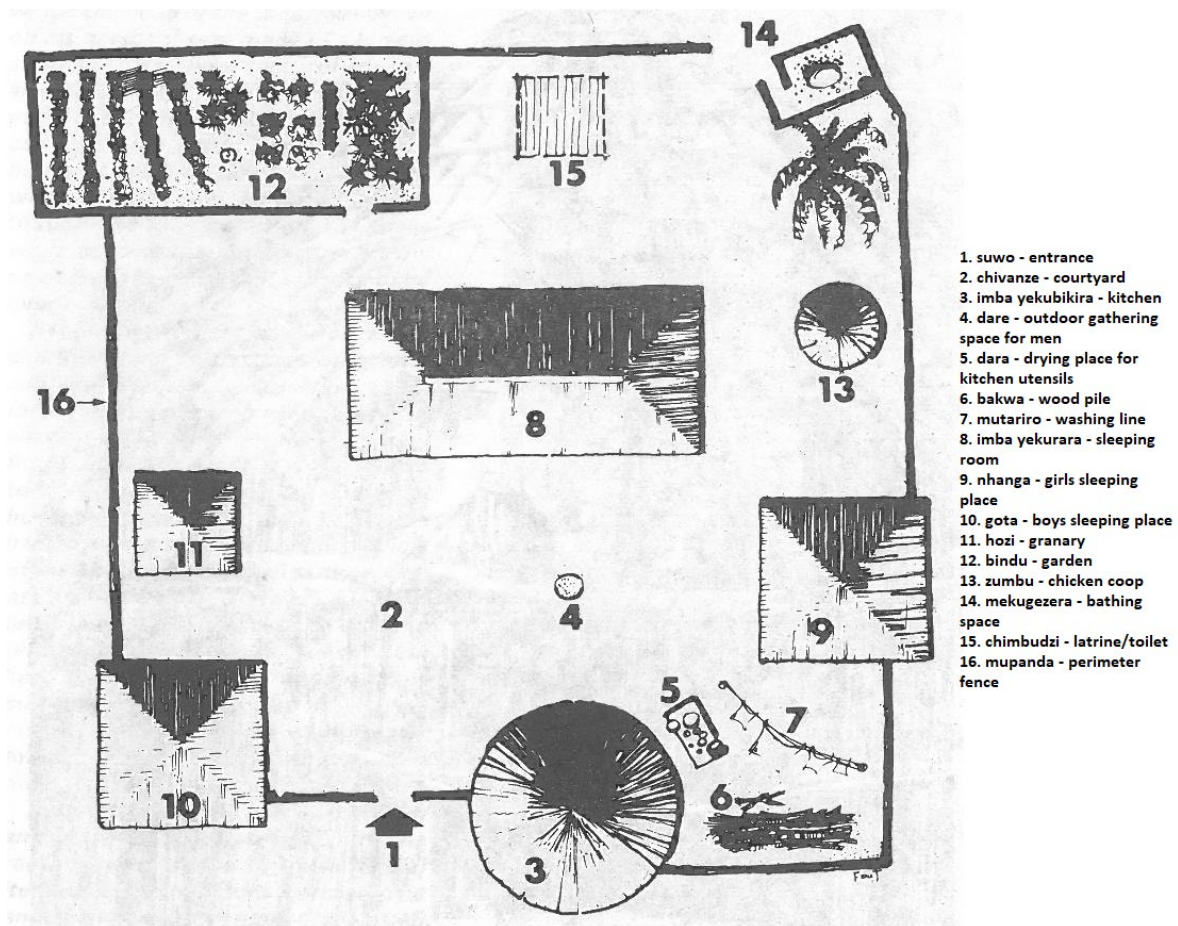


Fig. 5.2.2: Village/Musha layout. The homestead may measure as little as 20 metres by 20 metres (du Toit, 1981: 7)

The perimeter fence normally demarcates the *chivanze*, a cleared area where buildings are constructed (see Fig. 5.2.2). The dare is usually a meeting place for the



executive authority. As noted in Chapter Three, there is a synthesis of rectilinear and organic forms. The buildings are predominantly cone on the drum (see Plate 5.2.1).



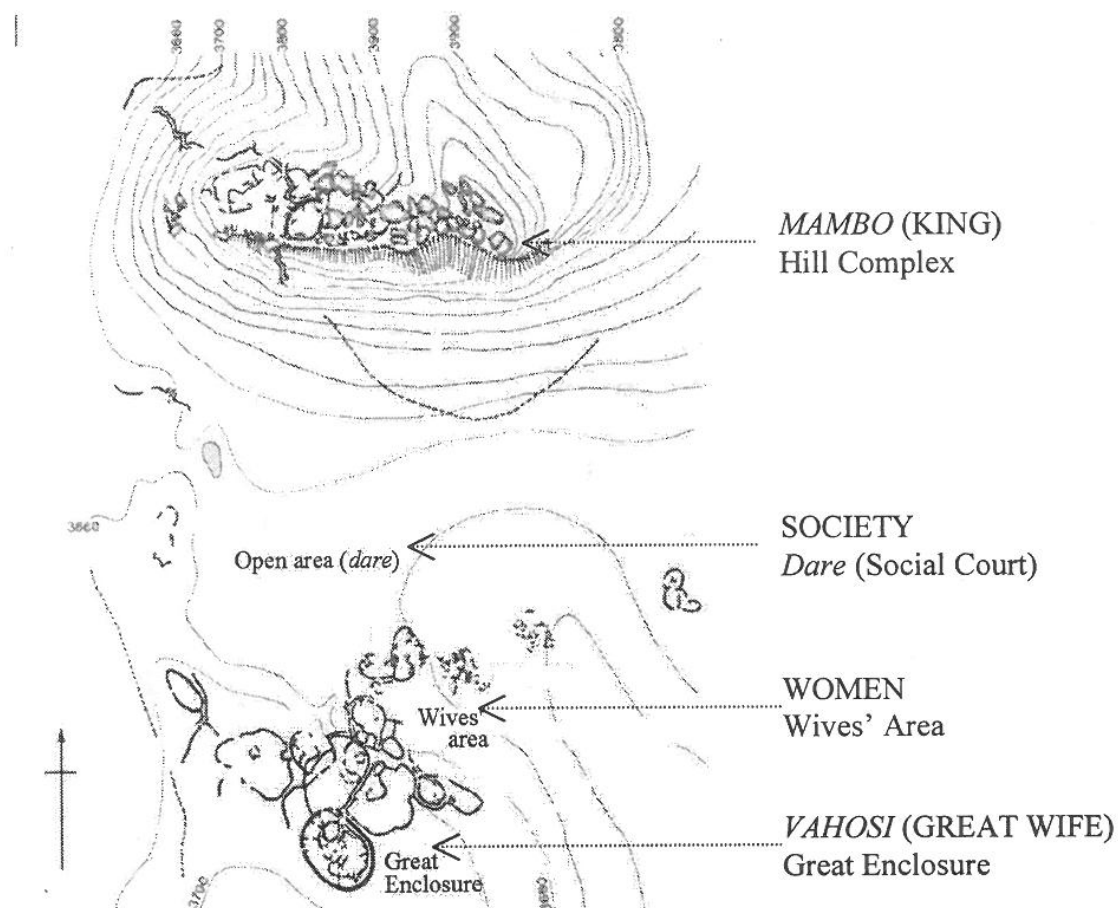
Plate 5.2.1: Predominantly cone on the drum forms (du Toit, 1981: 7)

A more formalised larger Shona settlement was built in the eleventh century at Great Zimbabwe during the Monomotapa Empire.

### 5.2.3 Great Zimbabwe: Myths and symbolism

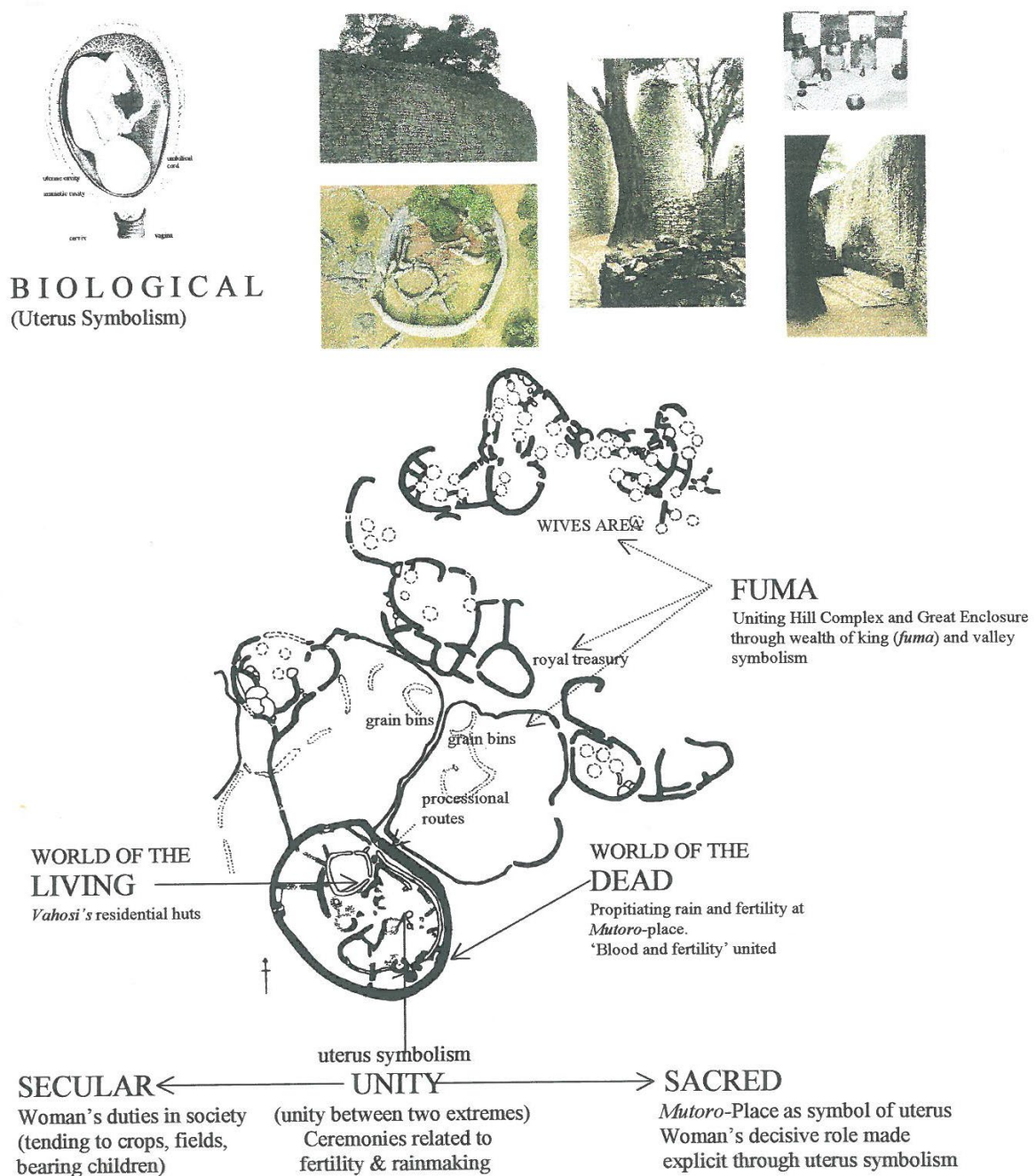
Shona architecture is abundantly displayed at Great Zimbabwe. This was the capital of a vast Shona Kingdom that was home to 18 000 people at its peak in the fourteenth century AD. The empire it once controlled extended over 100 000 square kilometres between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers (Swart *et al*, 1987: 1). The interest in studying this precedent is its symbolism and social hierarchy and how this translated into built form. In contrast to most other societies in Southern Africa, the social organisation of the Zimbabwe people was based on a marked distinction between commoners and a ruling class, whose right to rule was supported by a system of beliefs generally called “sacred kingship” (ibid).

A number of factors played out in the social stratification of the Bantu peoples as they migrated south from the Congo basin. These included religion, control of grazing land and trade routes. Whoever had authority with regard to these three major factors was able to accumulate power and wealth. As a result, a class-based society evolved in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries at a settlement known as Mapungubwe which was abandoned in the late thirteenth century. It is not known whether this was due to competition with Great Zimbabwe or natural disasters (ibid). Great Zimbabwe retained its dominance in trade from 1270 AD to approximately 150 years later (Swart et al, 1987: 3). It stands out from other stone building in Southern Africa by virtue of its size, quality, and the unprecedented interest expressed in it (Mallows, 1985: 33). It consists of three main areas, i.e. the Hill Complex, the Valley Ruins and the Great Enclosure (Fig. 5.2.3)



**Fig. 5.2.3: Plan of Great Zimbabwe and the possible symbolic siting of the dare (social court) between the Hill Complex and the Great Enclosure (Aspinall, 2000: 136)**

Important leaders lived in seclusion on high ground as a symbol of their authority; these were referred to as “mountains” in proverbs and poetry (Swart et al, 1987: 6). This symbolism is embedded in contemporary Shona culture whereby youngsters are not supposed to see the top of the head of their elders (*munhu mukuru haawonekwe panhongonya*). Thus, an elderly person sits on a chair and youngsters sit on the floor. The Hill Complex (Fig. 5.2.3 and 5.2.4) was a predominantly male domain whilst the Great Enclosure was predominantly a female one.



**Fig. 5.2.4: Great Enclosure (Vahosi – Female): Procreation and fertility – Architecture and space express the fertility of the Royal Family (Aspinall, 2000: 257)**

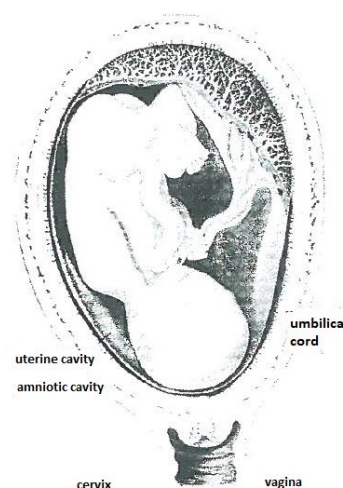
In Shona tradition, chieftainship is comparable to the majesty and loneliness of the hills. People living around Great Zimbabwe believe that the King, or mambo, lived on top of the hill on the Hill Complex and the royal wives below in the Great Enclosure.

The king provided security, fertile land and abundant crops to his people. In accordance with Shona tradition, the stone towers next to the monoliths were symbolic grain bins/granaries and can be seen at the gateway of the Ancient Ascent. However, scholars such as Cosmas Nyamutswa (2017) refute this assertion and argue that Great Zimbabwe was built by the Mwenye people, who are erroneously called the Lemba people (Nyamutswa, 2017: 119) and whose origins lie in East Africa and the Middle East. The Mwenye have lived among Bantu communities ever since they arrived in the area as they were not able to bring their women and took locals as wives. Today, they are classified as Shona although their culture is clearly non-Shona (Nyamutswa, 2017: 123). Nyamutswa states that Great Zimbabwe was built as an initiation centre by the Mwenye, consisting of Lemba, Hwesa and Beta. This argument is based on the importance of circumcision rites within Mwenye society. To this day, circumcision rites are considered to be a sacred and confidential practice that should be hidden behind high walls such as the Great Enclosure. The practice marks the coming of age of both boys and girls.

Phathisa Nyathi and Kudzai Chikomo (2013) note that these rites of passage highlighted the importance of reproduction in ensuring humanity's continued existence. Sexual reproduction or its symbolisation has been used to guarantee the continued existence of polities (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 55).

The argument that Great Zimbabwe was a centre for initiation is supported by the symbolism around fertility that is evident throughout the complex and is gender balanced. Aspinall and other scholars argue that a grain bin represents a phallus (Nyathi and Chikomo: 2016: 76 - 78). Great Zimbabwe's features and artefacts can be explained in terms of sexuality – fertility, sex and procreation. While there are male and female characteristics in many architectural symbols at Great Zimbabwe, opposing gender characteristics are often either combined in one symbol (for example in the Great Enclosure), or are placed alongside each other within the same enclosure or area (*mihombwe* with monoliths or towers with monoliths) (Aspinall, 2000: 134).

Aspinall argues that the Conical Tower incorporates both female and male attributes and broadly symbolises the ancestors. Nyamutswa (2017) and Nyathi and Chikomo (2016) note that the large conical tower was sandwiched between two smaller towers (with one still existing and the second having been destroyed by early colonial archaeologists and treasure hunters with its traces still identifiable), representing the testicles. Aspinall's argument is plausible but lacks pragmatic support as the element is solid without any hollowed interior for grain storage. However, overall, scholars agree that the Conical Tower symbolises reproduction. The two towers, one oversized and the other downsized and squat, symbolise combined male and female themes. This suggests that they were used to teach initiates at *domba* (initiation school) (Aspinall, 2000: 136). Of great interest is the position of the Social Court, as this is probably the most civic space of the settlement.



(Left) The sacred pool of water in the cave of the mountains as a symbol of the uterus

(Right) Sectional view of a woman's uterus

**Fig. 5.2.5: Pools of water are synonymous with the uterus (Aspinall, 2000: 83)**

As noted in Chapter Four, nature and cosmology play a critical role in Afrocentric positions. Great Zimbabwe is no exception. Symbolisation of nature and cosmology is widespread and is part of African life. A sacred pool in a cave in the Matopo Mountains was regarded as the source of life and cosmological symbol of fertility. Pools are therefore seen as the origin of God's life-giving creativity. God himself is referred to as the "Great Pool", (Fig. 5.2.5) since all waters come from him (Aspinall, 2000: 80).



These kind of pools are usually inhabited by mermaids that are called various names by different tribes. The structure of a sacred pool with fertility bearing snakes is therefore synonymous with the anatomical structure of the uterus with fertility bearing oviducts (snakes of the uterus) (Aspinall, 2000: 83). Symbolically identifying men's fertility with nature's, spiritually unites the biological and cosmological forces.

The sacred pool symbolises the amniotic fluid in the uterus. The cave symbolises the uterus, while its opening symbolises the cervix, and the fertility bearing snakes of the cave symbolise the fertility bearing oviducts ('snakes in the uterus') (*ibid*).

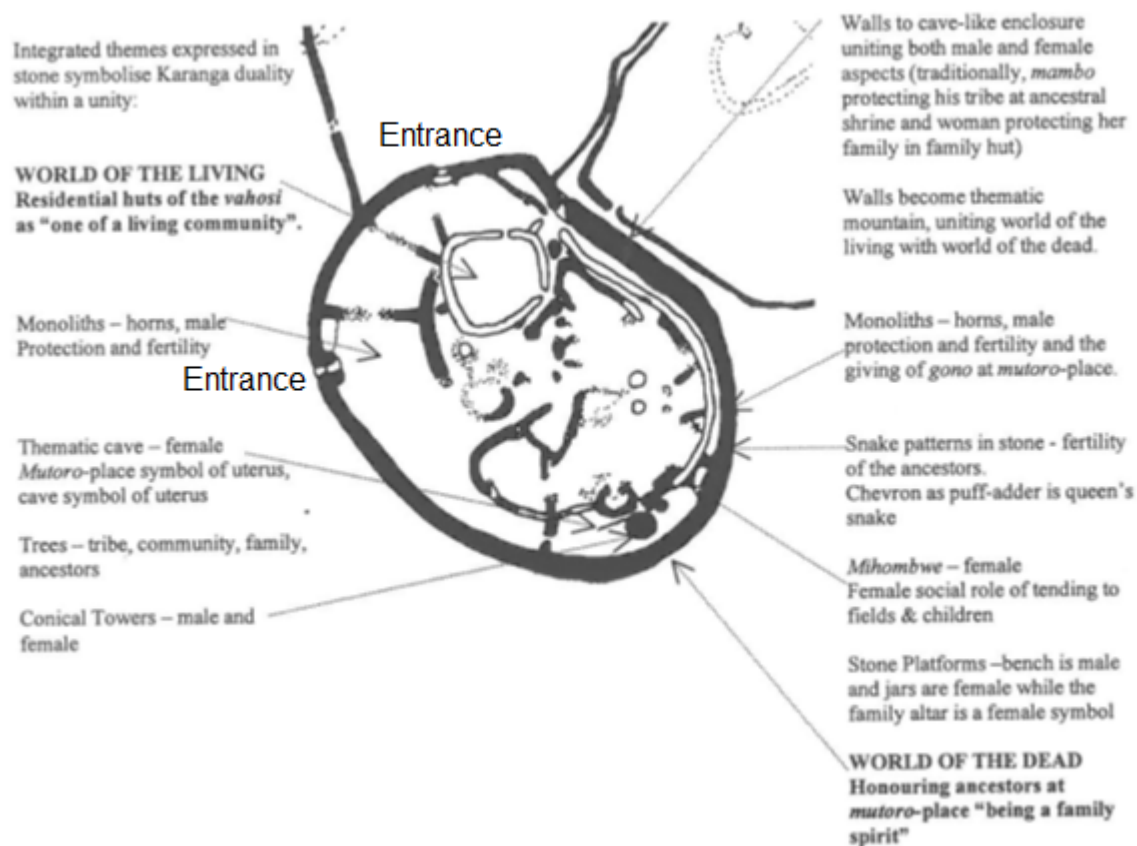


Fig. 5.2.6: The dual expression of unity at the Great Enclosure (Aspinall, 2000: 253)

The Great Enclosure (Fig. 5.2.6) symbolises the decisive role of fertility of woman and nature, through the symbol of the uterus (Aspinall, 2000: 253). This symbolic architectural expression works in parallel with the Hill Complex that is situated on a symbolic mountain (God's creativity), expressing the decisive role of the mambo as the protector and provider (*ibid*). Being on a mountain symbolises closeness to the creator of the universe and is embedded in most African cultures even among

contemporary religious groupings (Pentecostal) like the Apostolic Faith, Zion Christian Church etc. The builders of Great Zimbabwe drew on this Afrocentric psyche.

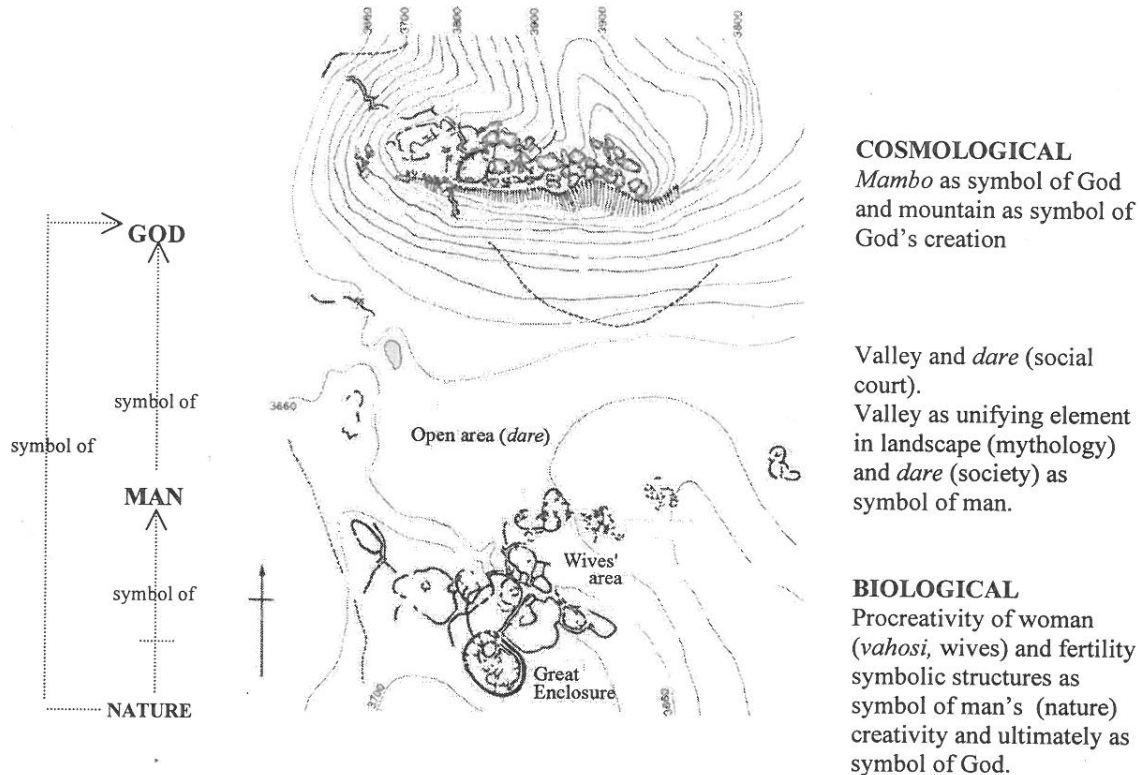


Fig. 5.2.7: Mythological interpretation of the settlement as a symbolic landscape, reflecting the virtues of symbolic interaction theory (Aspianall, 2000: 165)

The Mwenye people consciously manipulated the physical, spiritual, biological and cosmological forces to ensure harmony between God and earth (Fig. 5.2.7 and 5.2.8).

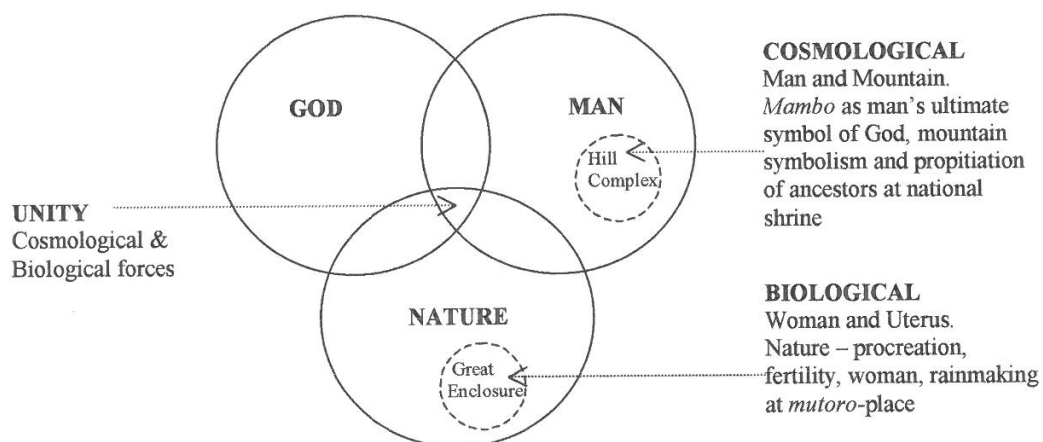
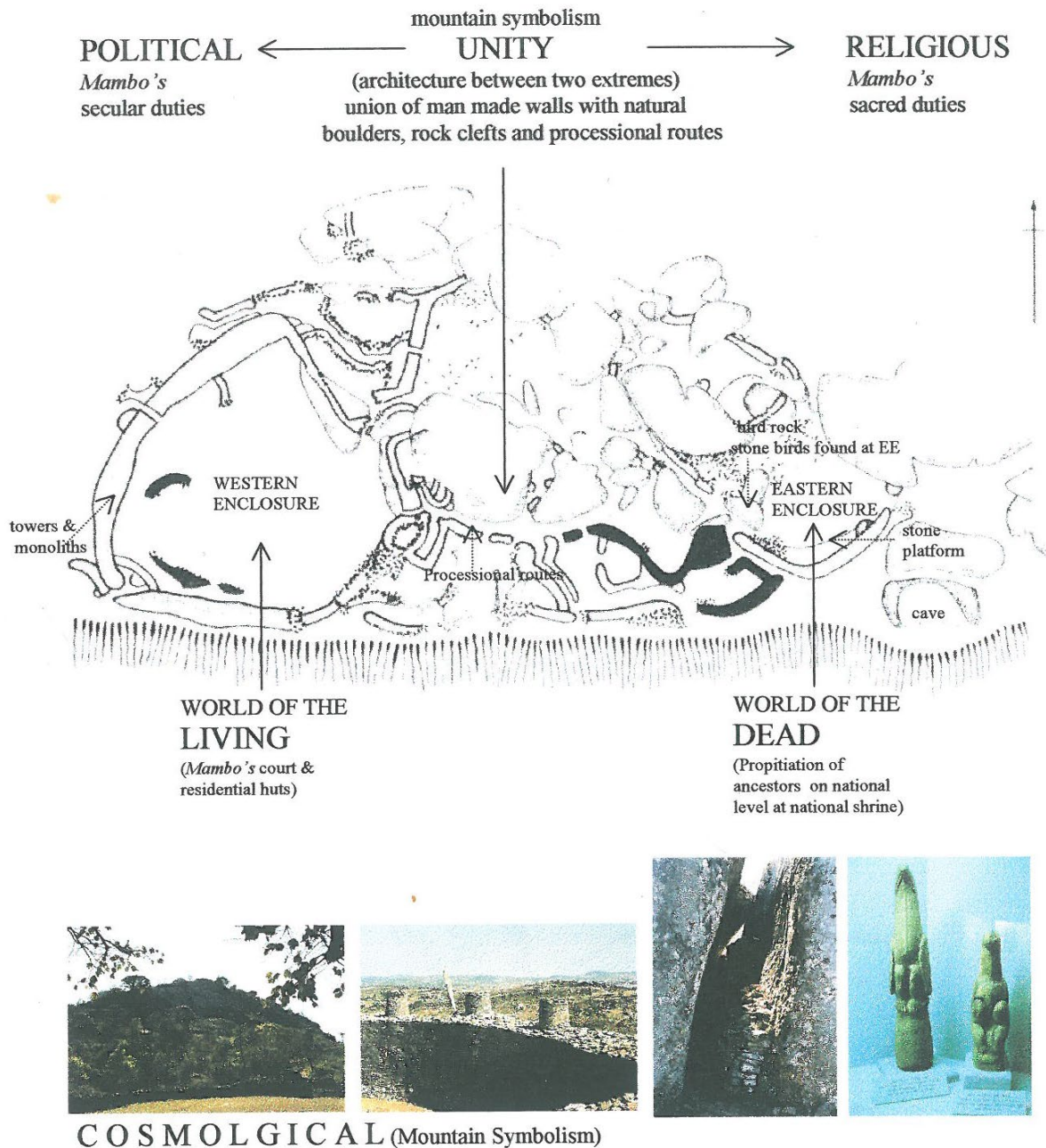


Fig. 5.2.8: Symbolisation of the hierachy between God, man and nature (Aspinall, 2000: 254)





**Fig. 5.2.9: Hill Complex (Mambo – Male), Protection and provision – Architecture and space express the success of the State – Man connected to God through nature and cosmology (Aspinall, 2000: 256)**

The Great Enclosure was designed to create a linkage between God and biological forces through procreation. This was reflected in the architecture and how it responded symbolically. The *dare* (civic space) at Great Zimbabwe is sited in a valley, which is often referred to in Karanga mythology as uniting mountains, and man and God (Aspanall, 2000: 164). Great Zimbabwe is symbolically considered to be constituted of God's three "places" – water, cave and mountains. Those that argue that Great

Zimbabwe was built as an initiation centre postulate that the valley complex was the temporary home of initiates from a vast Mwenye territory. In other words it can be considered to be the home of civic spaces since it was settled by a large civic population in the form of initiates.

The symbolism surrounding Great Zimbabwe is a direct product of how the Mwenye people perceived the world around them and the built forms were a reflection of self. This fits with symbolic interaction theory.

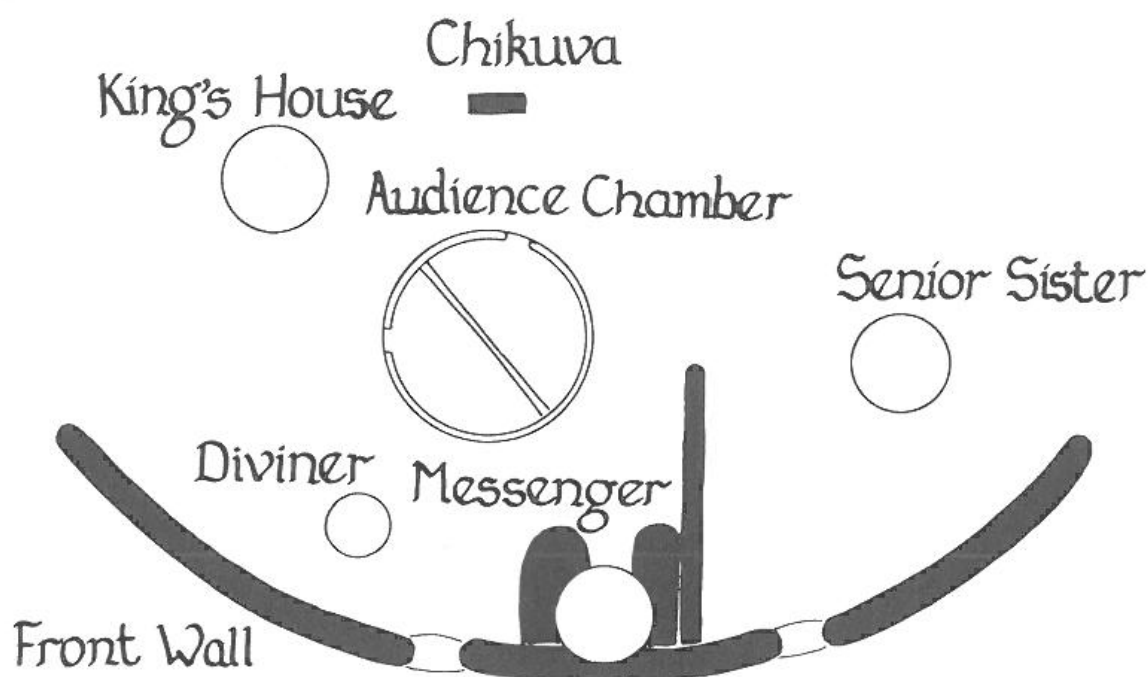
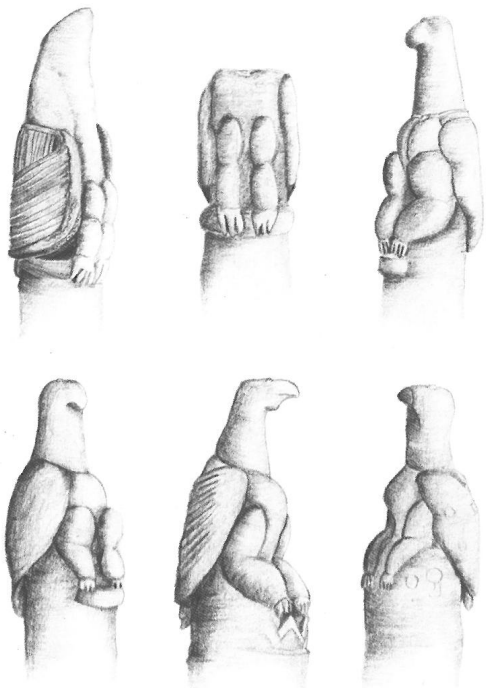


Fig. 5.2.10: Typical plan of a Zimbabwean palace. In a typical Shona dwelling, the chikuva is at the back (Swart et al, 1986: 10)

The artificial platforms on the slopes of the Hill Complex were probably inhabited by royalty and members of the king's personnel entourage (Swart et al, 191987: 8). In most traditional settlements the front is reserved for secular activities whilst the back is for private and sacred functions. The Hill Complex has four enclosures: Western, Cleft Rock, Eastern and Gold Furnace. The arrangement of these enclosures is typical of Zimbabwean palaces where the front wall provided for ritual seclusion, rather than defence (Fig. 5.2.10). The cleft enclosure was the residence of the king and the king's sister who were consulted on any decisions of national importance. The area behind

the king's residence was the most sacred. The Eastern Enclosure incorporates towering boulders, a rock shelter and a unique underground passage (now covered up) that would have enhanced the mystery of the spirit world (Swart et al, 1978: 16). No evidence has been found of any residential construction and only ceremonial items such as soapstone bowls and stone monoliths were discovered. This is therefore considered to be the national religious centre of the kingdom. Zimbabwe birds have also been discovered (Fig. 5.2.11).



**Fig. 5.2.11: The Six Zimbabwe Birds discovered in the Eastern Enclosure (Swart et al, 1987: 17)**



**Fig. 5.2.12: Phallic birds with woman's legs and buttocks (Nyamutsa, 2017: 198).**

In Shona symbolism, some birds are messengers, and the chapungu, or bateleur eagle, is a particularly important messenger of the ancestral spirits. Because these eagles travel between heaven and earth, they can, symbolically, also be messengers of God (Swart et al, 1987: 18). The spirits of the kings are said to ascend to the heavens to intercede between God and the nation.

Each ancestor is said to be unique. It is not clear where the six birds discovered in the Eastern Enclosure were originally located. The symbolism of the "Zimbabwe bird" is refuted by contemporary Great Zimbabwe studies that argue that this was an artistic

representation of a sexual encounter, with the woman bending over and the phallus being the neck covered by the labia.

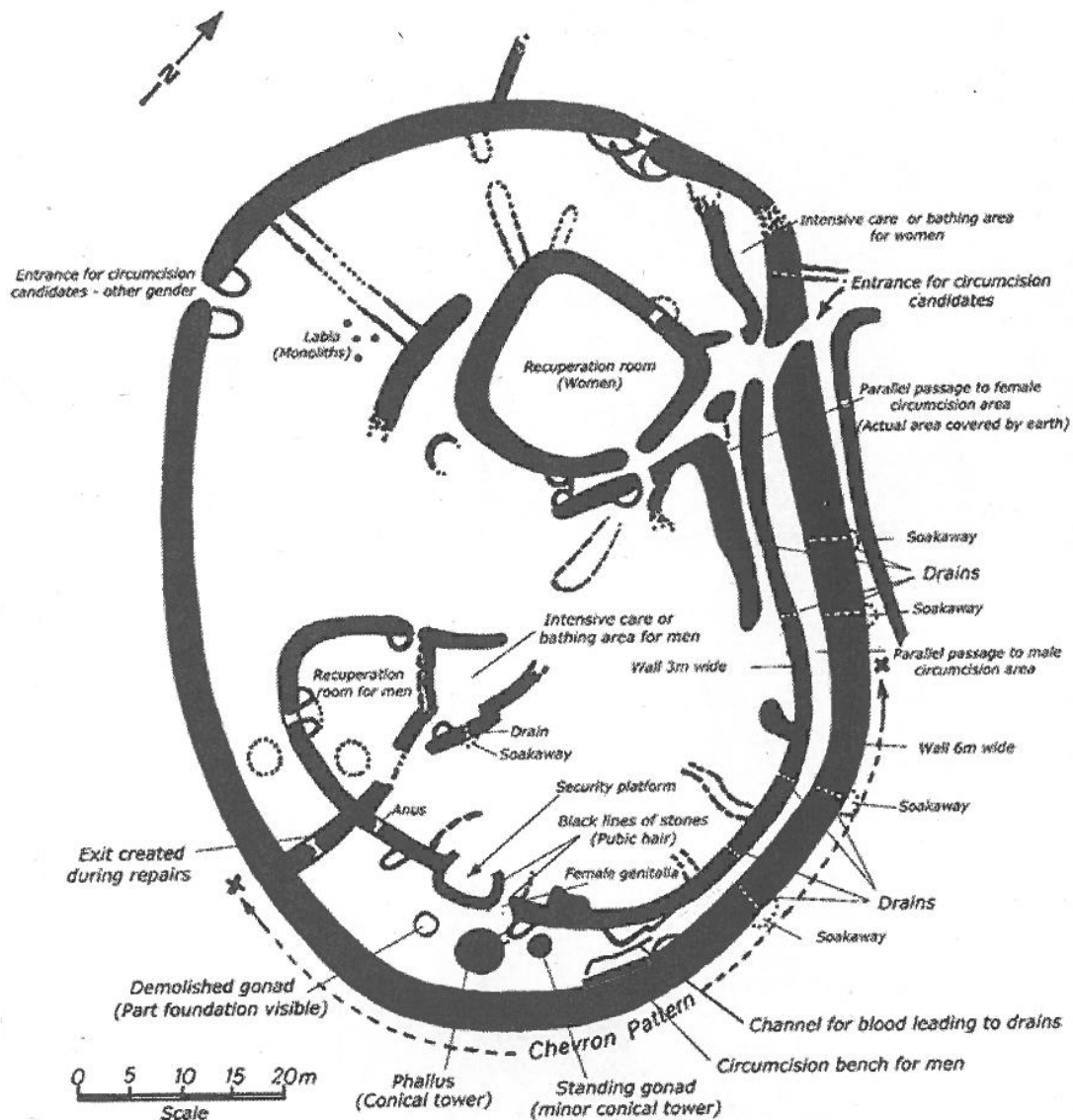


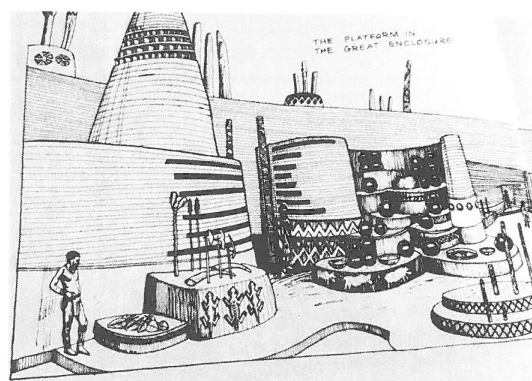
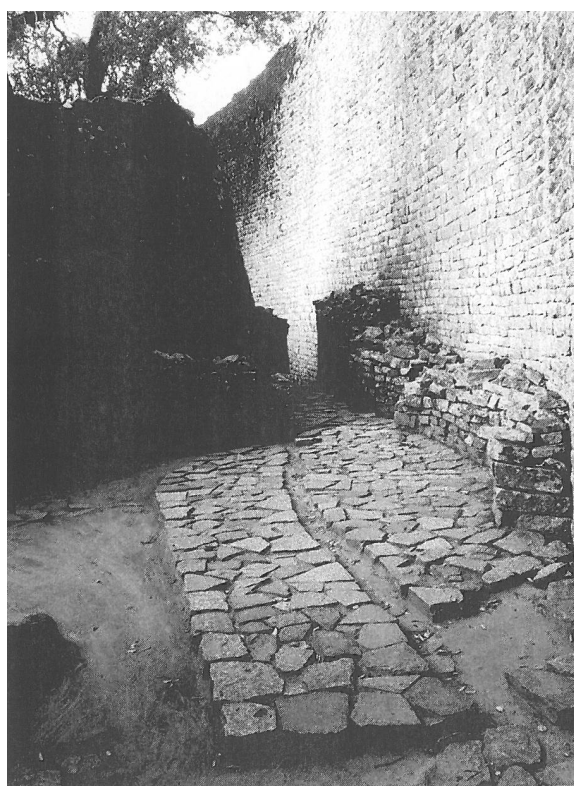
Fig. 5.2.13: The analytical plan of the Great Enclosure as an initiation and circumcision nerve centre (Nyamuyswa, 2017: 207)

Questionable features are:

- the bird's neck - deliberately elongated;
- the heads - have no beaks;
- legs – clearly not avian but human;
- feet - some have five toes with no resemblance to an eagle or any bird's claws.

These are human legs that are attached to the buttocks of a person kneeling and bending forward in a crouching position (Nyamutswa, 2017: 196). An elongated neck symbolises an erect and circumcised phallus and the thighs suggest a woman crouching in a sexual encounter (Nyamutswa, 2017: 196 – 199) (Fig. 5.2.12).

There is archaeological evidence that the Great Enclosure was the residence of the king's wives and most likely his first wife. Evidence of grain bins suggests that this was the site of the “national” granary as in Shona custom the first wife, *vahosi*, was responsible for distributing grain to the less fortunate or those who had run out.



**Fig. 5.2.14: Artist's impression of circumcision area** (Nyamutswa, 2017: 211)

**Plate 5.2.2: Sacred Enclosure showing the men's circumcision bench and the narrow channel leading to drains and soakaways** (Nyamutswa, 2017: 210).

The assertion that the Conical Tower was a grain bin is questionable as most scholars agree that the Great Enclosure was the centre for circumcision rites (Nyamutswa, 2017; Aspinall, 2000; Swart et al, 1987). Nyamutswa built a replica of the original Conical Tower with an erect phallus, with the dwarf cones representing the testicles (Fig.5.2.13 and Fig. 5.2.14). As an initiation centre the phallus was used as a teaching tool set in front of a circumcision bench (Plate 5.2.2).

The Great Enclosure consists of the Great Wall, Conical Tower, the Three Platforms and the “parallel passage” following the inside of the Great Wall.

Initiation schools are not part of contemporary culture but it is possible this was common practice during the life of Great Zimbabwe. This is drawn from similarities with Venda culture in South Africa which is believed to have common ancestry with the Mwenye people. It is believed that besides being a female domain, the Great Enclosure was the site of a premarital initiation school. This argument is supported by several of the building’s features.



**Plate 5.2.3: A replica of the original Conical Tower built by Cosmas Nyamutswa at his home in Borrowdale, Harare (Nyamutswa, 2017: i)**

The reasons are:

- The Great Enclosure was located on the edge of the wives’ area because premarital education was the domain of women.
- The building contains separate entrances for men and women and the male/female theme inside reflects the overall theme of the school – proper behaviour for married people.

- The large open space between the daga platform and the conical towers in the back was probably where the secret lessons were taught, and the daga platform itself was most likely a stage for some of the lessons that used the figurines (Swart et al, 1987: 37).

This study seeks to link symbolism to built form, with symbolism drawn from social belief systems and religion and by extension, cosmology. There are similarities between the architecture at Great Zimbabwe and contemporary Shona traditional

architecture. As will be discussed later, most contemporary buildings have sought to draw from this inspiration but the jury is still out on how successful these efforts have been.

This section described the built environment that the colonialists found in place in Zimbabwe. The following section focuses on colonial architecture.

#### **5.2.4 Colonial architecture**

Zimbabwe adopted the name of a Shona state that was centred on the city of Great Zimbabwe. This state flourished between five and eight hundred years ago, and its ruined stone walls are one of the most remarkable monuments in Africa (Garlake, in Peel and Ranger: 1983: 1). The colonisation of Zimbabwe was based on deceit and treachery, with Cecil John Rhodes and his countrymen at the centre.

Practical colonisation of the country began with the march of the British South African Police from Kimberley. Their first point of call was Fort Victoria in the midst of tense relations with Lobengula's Ndebele Kingdom. Beyond Fort Victoria the Pioneer Column made faster progress. Covering a hundred miles a day to the north, they established Fort Charter and on 12 September 1890, after crossing the Hunyani River, the wagons were outspanned five miles from Mount Hampden and Fort Salisbury was founded (Wills, 1985: 142) (Fig. 5.2.15).

It was on this day that the Union Jack was raised to proclaim a claim to the territory. When the column disbanded at the end of October 1890, many of its civilian members disappeared into the veld to search for gold reefs and ancient workings, while others set themselves up in business in makeshift shops along the foot of the kopje (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: vii). This marked the beginnings of colonial architecture in Zimbabwe. The police that had escorted the Pioneer Column through modern Botswana (Bechuanaland) remained and established themselves in mud huts on high ground to the north-east of the vlei (ibid).





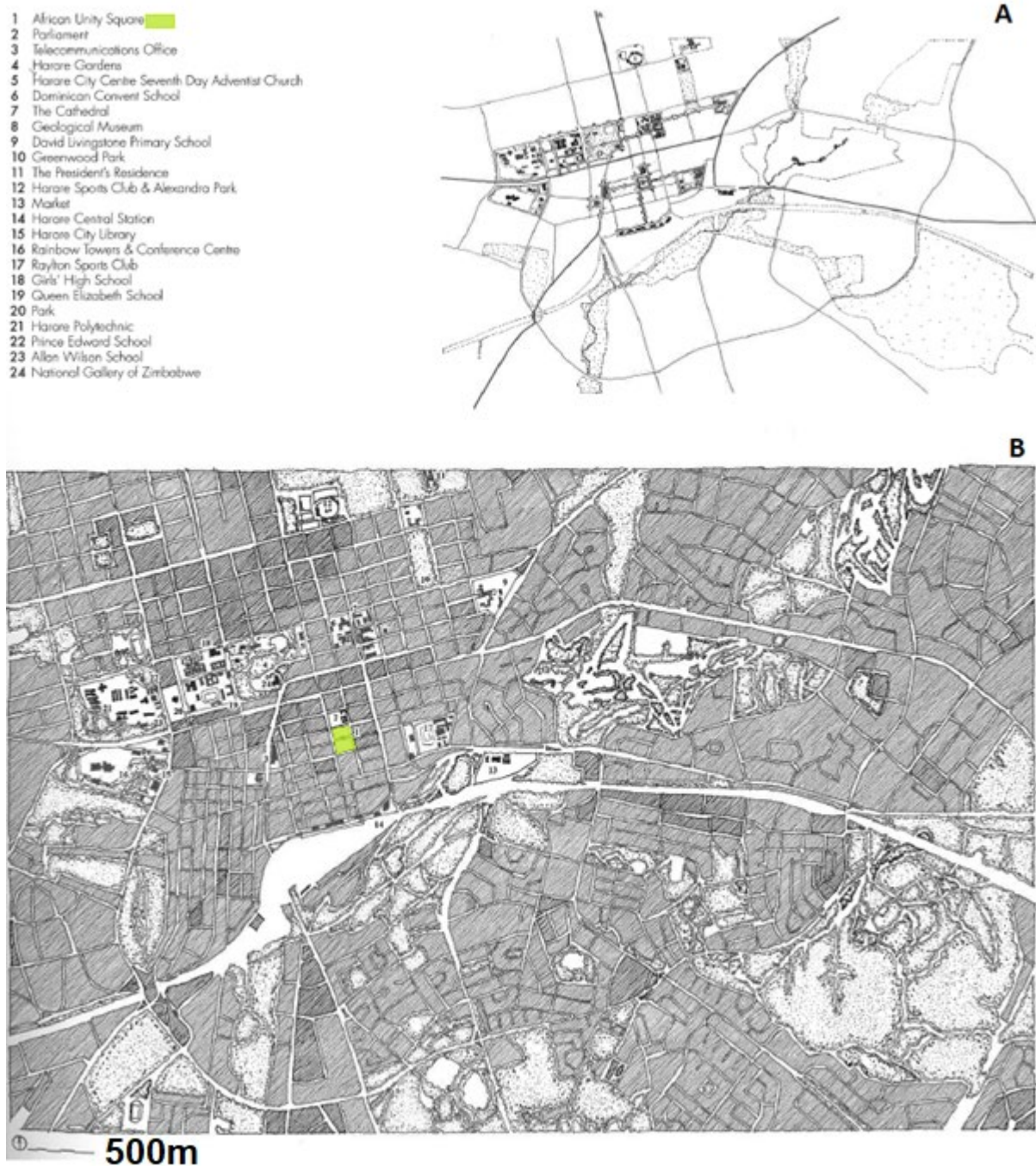
Fig. 5.2.15: Onset of the colonial occupation of Central Africa (Wills, 1985: 176)



**Fig. 5.2.16: Temporary shelters built by Settlers in Fort Salisbury (Harare) along Pioneer Street (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 3).**

This area was called the Causeway and from its inception, it competed with the Kopje. Pioneer Street (Kaguvi Street) was the first formal connection between the Kopje and the Causeway. The Pioneer Column established Fort Salisbury at the beginning of the rainy season. This resulted in the construction of simple shelters (Fig. 5.2.16). Skipper House, who had commanded the British South African Pioneer Company, was one of the first to establish himself in the Shona tribesmen-built huts. Salisbury (Harare) was planned by T. A. Ross in 1890 and is a set of two simple grid patterns. The first is around the central gardens, stretching from Jameson Avenue (Samora Machel Avenue) to Rhodes Avenue and from Moffat Street (Leopold Takawira Street) to Second Street (Sam Nujoma Street) while the second is around the Kopje (Fig. 5.2.17).

One can observe the fundamental differences between the traditional architecture of the Shona people and that brought by the colonialists. Indeed, the fact that locals were hired to work on the settlers' shelters was a foreign ideology. Plans for the settlement led to competition among various companies and individuals to buy land and establish businesses.



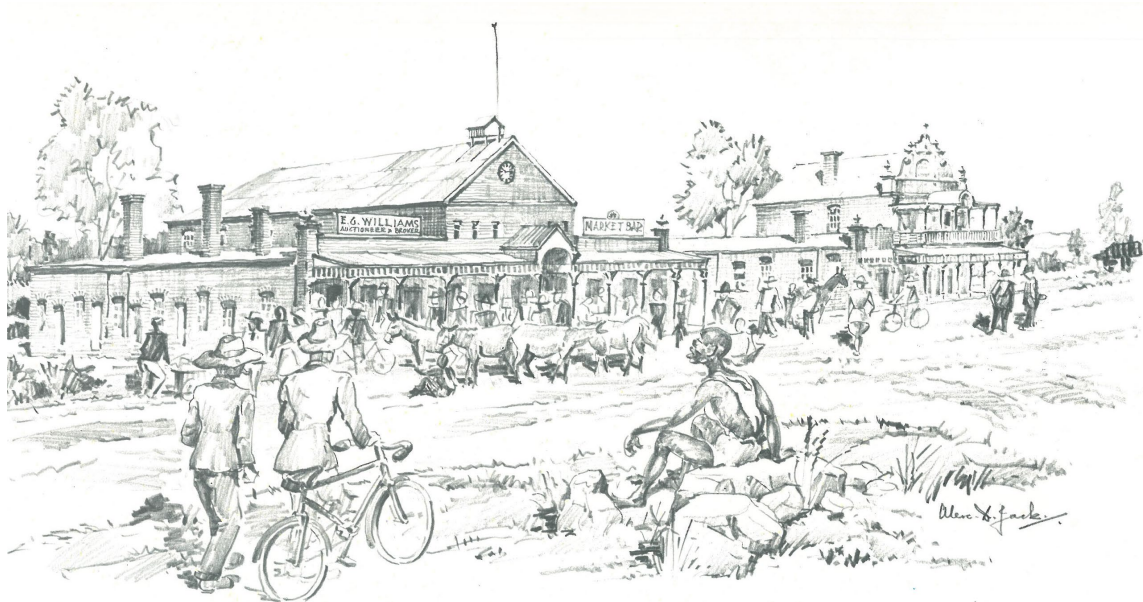
**Fig. 5.2.17: Harare, as is in 2015. A – General layout and B – City Centre (White, Pienaar, Serfontein, 2015: 95).**

O'Connor argues that Harare is a European city in his categorisation of African city typologies since he planning and design was determined by, and for, the incoming settler population needs (White, Pienaar, Serfontein, 2015: 94). He further argues that settlements like these were set up by Europeans as “homes” and reflected European



town planning ideas more clearly than many town in Europe (*ibid*). In this sense the planning of the city was an antithesis of an Afrocentric placemaking.

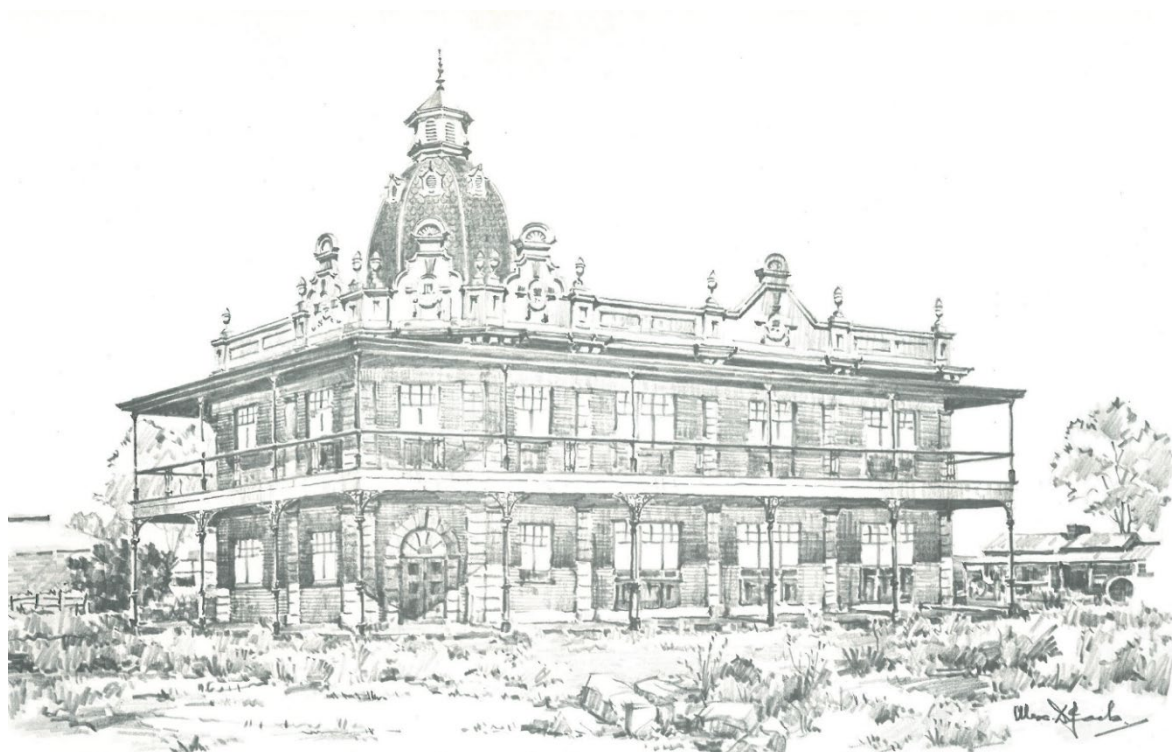
The overall morphology of the colonial city is still intact amid growing modernity and Africanity with respect to architectural developments.



**Fig. 5.2.18: The foundation of the first brick building in Harare was laid on 8 August 1893 (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 9)**

One of the biggest structures and the first brick building constructed in the settlement was the brainchild of the first mayor of Salisbury (Harare), W. E. Fairbridge. The building was planned to house a market hall, a bank, a bar, offices and a committee room for members of the Sanitary Board (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 9). The main hall measured 63 feet by 33 feet and was 40 feet high (Fig. 5.2.18).

In 1904 Broadway House (Fig. 5.2.19) was built on the corner of Speke Avenue and Kingsway (Julius Nyerere). Designed by architect George E. Turner, this prestigious office building was occupied by several businessmen including Mr Byrom Moore, an American dentist (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 16). The cupola, which housed the bell from the market, lead sheeting and roof, was embellished with zinc balls and cast-iron ridging (*ibid*). The cupola has been removed but the façade and its veranda remain intact.



**Fig. 5.2.19: Broadway House with its original cupola, a far cry from Shona traditional architecture (Jack, Cobban, and Williams: 16)**

At this stage, the visuals were clearly European in outlook. The building forms reflected those of the settlers' home country, with no consideration of local traditions. The chief architect of colonialism in most parts of Central and Southern Africa, Cecil John Rhodes was celebrated across the land and Salisbury (Harare) was no exception. The statue of Rhodes in Jameson Avenue (Samora Machel Avenue) (see Fig. 5.2.20) was designed by John Tweed in 1932. Behind it, on the corner of Third Street, is Chaplin Building, erected in 1900 for Standard Bank. The building was eventually bought by the British South Africa Company in February 1912 and today it houses government departments (ibid). The statue was brought down after independence in 1980.

The first five-storey building in Salisbury (Harare), the National Employers' Mutual Building, was erected on the south-eastern corner of Baker Avenue and First Street in 1930. There are five shops on the ground floor and four floors of offices (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 78). On the opposite side is F. W. Woolworth & Co.'s building which was influenced by modernism with its mosaic and terrazzo façade along First

Street (Fig. 5.2.21). Functionalism now ruled supreme – a far cry from the round huts first built on the arrival of the settlers in 1890.

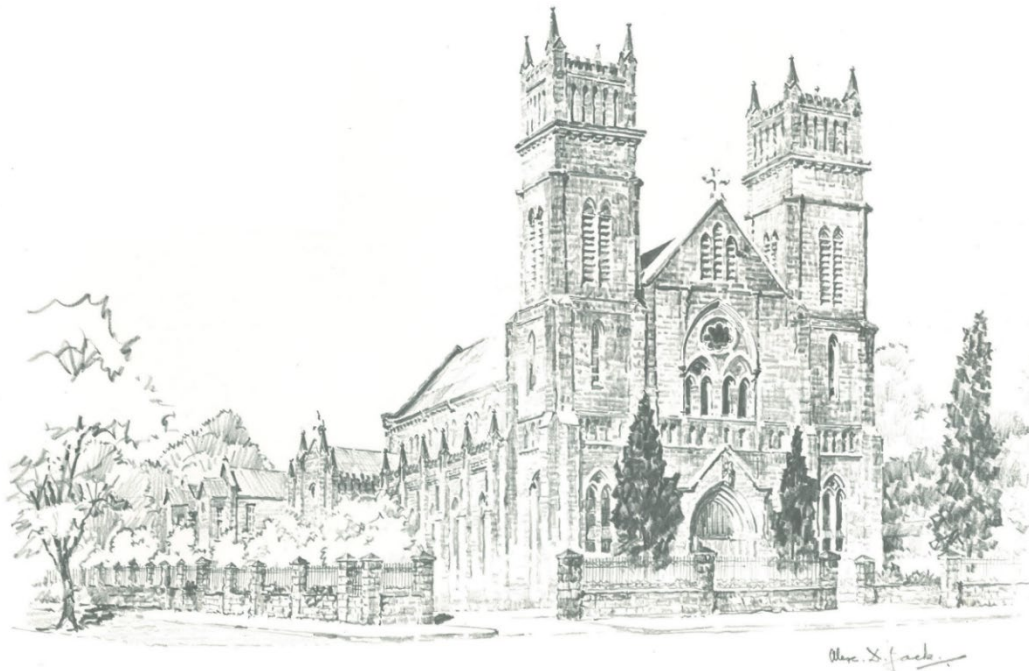


**Fig. 5.2.20: The Rhodes statue stood in front of the government offices. This statute was demolished at independence in 1980. It was never replaced with any feature (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 87)**



**Fig. 5.2.21: Modernist architecture dominates First Street (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 78)**





**Fig. 5.2.22: The Roman Catholic cathedral fronting a civic space claimed its identity in the city (Jack, Cobban, Williams, 1981: 105)**

The built form in the city reflected the proclivities of those that ruled it. Not only did the settlers reflect architectural developments in the Western world, they also brought with them their religion that was reflected in the built form. The Roman Catholic Cathedral on Fourth Street with its Gothic architecture was built opposite Cecil Square (Africa Unity Square) in 1925 (Fig 5.2.22). Its two towers are 800 feet high, while the building is 131 feet long and measures 56 feet from the floor to the apex of the roof (Jack, Cobban and Williams, 1981: 105).

This section provides the colonial context for discussion of a civic space, Africa Unity Square.

#### **5.2.5 Africa Unity Square: A symbolically colonial space**

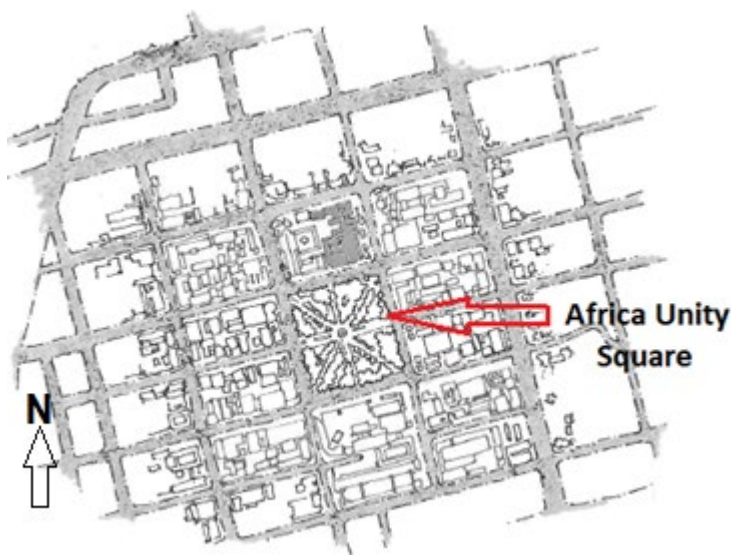
Africa Unity Square, which is the renamed Cecil Square, is one of the most popular civic spaces in Harare. It was built in 1890 at the onset of colonialism and its design was influenced by the Union Jack – a symbol of colonialism. Its conceptual similarity is shown in Plate 5.2.11.





**Plate 5.2.4: The influence of the Union Jack in the design of Africa Unity Square (Charamba and Nhambura, 28 March 2018)**

This conceptual design was appropriate because it was the site where the British South African Police (BSAP) first hoisted the Union Jack to mark their conquest of the territory. History has it that around 10am on 13 September 1890 members of the Pioneer Column tied the Union Jack to the end of a Msasa pole and hoisted it in the centre of the park before offering a prayer and firing salutes from two field guns (Charamba and Nhimbura, 28 March 2018).



**Fig. 5.2.23: Africa Unity Square in context (White, Pienaar, Serfontein, 2015: 95).**

The square's context is defined by the Parliamentary Buildings to the north, the Harare Chamber building to the east and Meikles Hotel to the south with the Anglican Cathedral in the north-west completing the surrounds.

The Parliament building was originally planned as a hotel; the buildings were taken over by the British South African Company (BSAC) after the developers went bankrupt. It served as a post office in 1898 and a year later hosted the first Legislative Assembly (Charamba and Nhimbura, 28 March 2018).



**Plate 5.2.5: St Mary's Cathedral, Harare located NW of Africa Unity Square (Google, 28/3/2018)**



**Plate 5.2.6: View to the SE of Africa Unity Square towards the Meikles Hotel (Google, 28/3/2018)**





**Plate 5.2.7: View towards the fountain in the middle of Africa Unity Square (Google, 28/3/2018)**

The square was named after Lord Salisbury, then Prime Minister of Britain and renamed Africa Unity Square at independence in 1980. Besides its name, it lacks any Afrocentric characteristics. It is believed that the place was previously called suwoguru (a huge entrance) and was a local shrine for the indigenous peoples of Zvimba, Seke and Chinamhora.

This civic space is located in the middle of the Harare CBD and presents the opportunity to take into account the cosmological characteristics that were discussed in relation to Great Zimbabwe.

Having discussed the historical, social and corresponding architectural developments in Mashonaland, in the pre-colonial, colonial and decolonisation eras, the discussion now turns to Mthwakazi where the case study is located.

Post-independence governments have launched various offensives to suppress Mthwakazi identity. These include the Gukurahundi atrocities at the onset of

independence when more than 50 000 amaNdebele were murdered. Relentless efforts have been made to keep the lid on this issue that has since been classified as genocide (Sisulu and Ncube, 2007, CCJP Report, 1987). The following section discusses the geographical and historical context of the case study and efforts to unseat maShona dominance of other groups in the country.

The history of the Ndebele Kingdom is embedded in amaNguni culture. The discussion thus begins with Shaka's Zulu Kingdom.

### 5.3 ECHOES FROM MTHWAKAZI'S PAST

Bantu migration reached the south-eastern coastline of modern KwaZulu-Natal about 2 000 years ago with skills acquired due to ecological demands and population growth. The Nguni tribes began to grow into confederacies and the population exploded due to the abundance of food and pastures. Competition for resources became fierce, resulting in the Mfecane wars and changes in the Nguni groups that culminated in the emergence of the Zulu nation. The Mfecane wars caused forced migrations, mainly northwards from present day KwaZulu-Natal from around the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. This resulted in the demographic, social, and political configuration of many societies in southern and eastern Africa as far afield as Tanzania. It gave rise to the present day Ndebele nation founded by Mzilikazi kaMashobane who are the main inhabitants of Matabeleland and the Midlands provinces in Zimbabwe. This section discusses the history of the proto-Ndebele and Ndebele Kingdom (collectively known as the Mthwakazi Kingdom) that was in existence until it was invaded by British elephant hunters and gold miners in 1893.

As discussed below, the built environment reflected the importance of security.

#### 5.3.1 The Zulu Kingdom and architecture

The early decades of the nineteenth century were marked by widespread wars that are generally known as the Mfecane, meaning crushing, by the Nguni of the southeast

and Defaqane or Lifaqane, meaning the scattering, by the Sotho-Tswana of the Highveld (Fig. 5.3.1). They had far reaching consequences that reverberated as far as East Africa where the Ngoni states were founded. The trigger was competition for increasingly limited natural resources that arose among the Mthethwa of Dingiswayo, Ndwandwe of Zwile and the Ngwane of Sobhuza (Shillington, 1995: 225, 258 - 266). This precipitated the rise of the Zulu Kingdom that started as a clan under the rule of the younger son of Malandela, Zulu, and was consolidated into what it is today by King Shaka, son of Senzangakhona. Most surrounding abeNguni empires were drafted into the new dispensation either peacefully or by conquest.

The building of the Zulu Nation was influenced by the need for security and the social structure played a significant role. This structure was influenced by elements of nature that are considered to be the anchor of human existence. For instance, the naming of the time of day, weeks and months of the year is directed by the behaviour of the sun, the moon and the earth; not as worshiped gods but as drivers of nature (Mhlaba, 2009: 27).

As noted in Chapter Four, this is typical of most African social organisation. For centuries, Africans have subscribed to the notion of a spiritual continuum within which the dead and the living, natural objects, spirits, divinities, the individual, clan and tribe, animals, plants, minerals and humans form an unbroken hierarchical unit of spiritual forces (Ngubane, 2004 in Mhlaba, 2009: 27).

This section considers precolonial traditional architecture in order to trace the amaNdebele's history south of the Limpopo River. AmaZulu settlements were organic in form, with the most valuable assets located off-centre where the cattle kraal was. The middle of the settlement was also used for military parades. There are two main approaches to building defensive settlements: on top of a mountain/hill with the most valuable assets at the top, or in a circular form with the valuable assets at the centre.

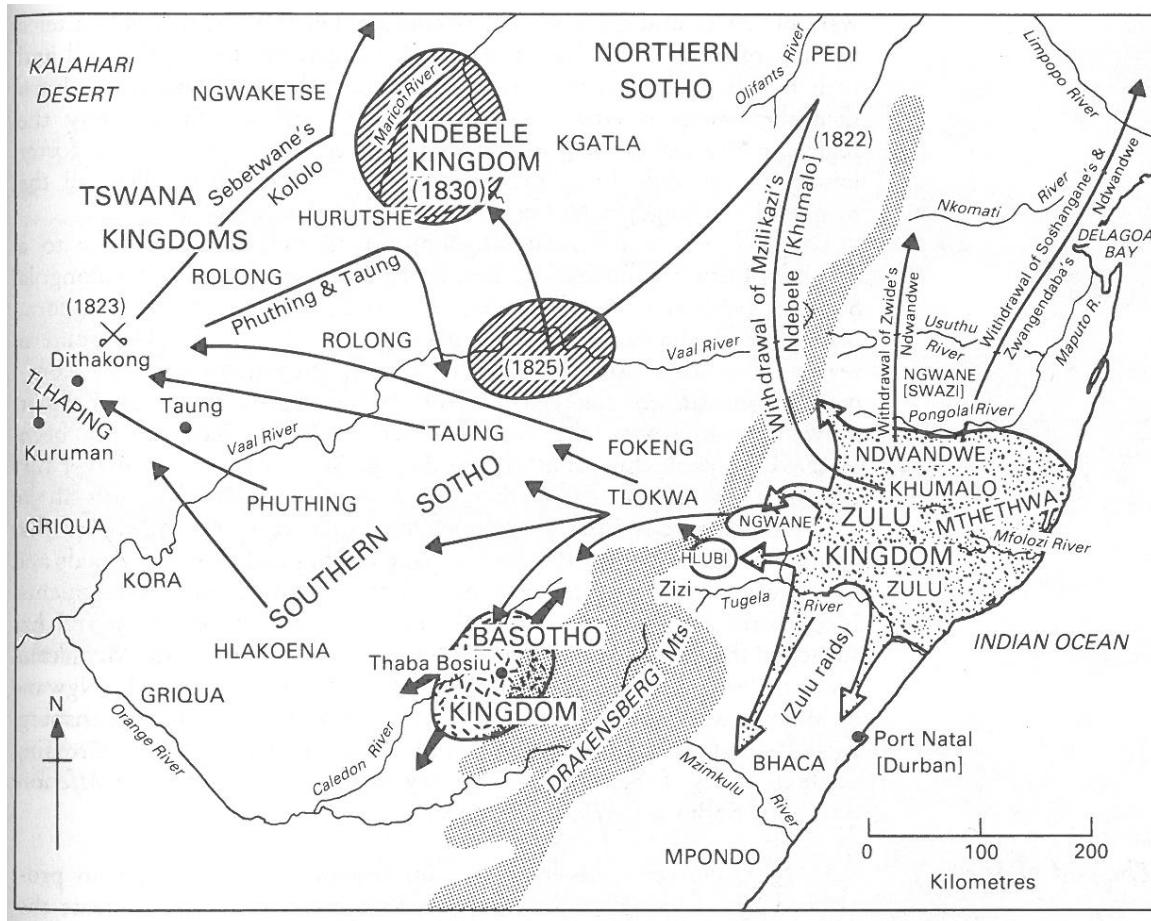


Fig. 5.3.1: The Mfecane Wars and the Rise of Ndebele Kingdom, 1818 - 35 (Source: Shillington, 1995: 261)



Fig. 5.3.2 - A Typical Zulu Settlement layout (as in King Dingane's uMgungundlovu and Cetshwayo's Ulundi (Source: Shillington, 1995: 261)

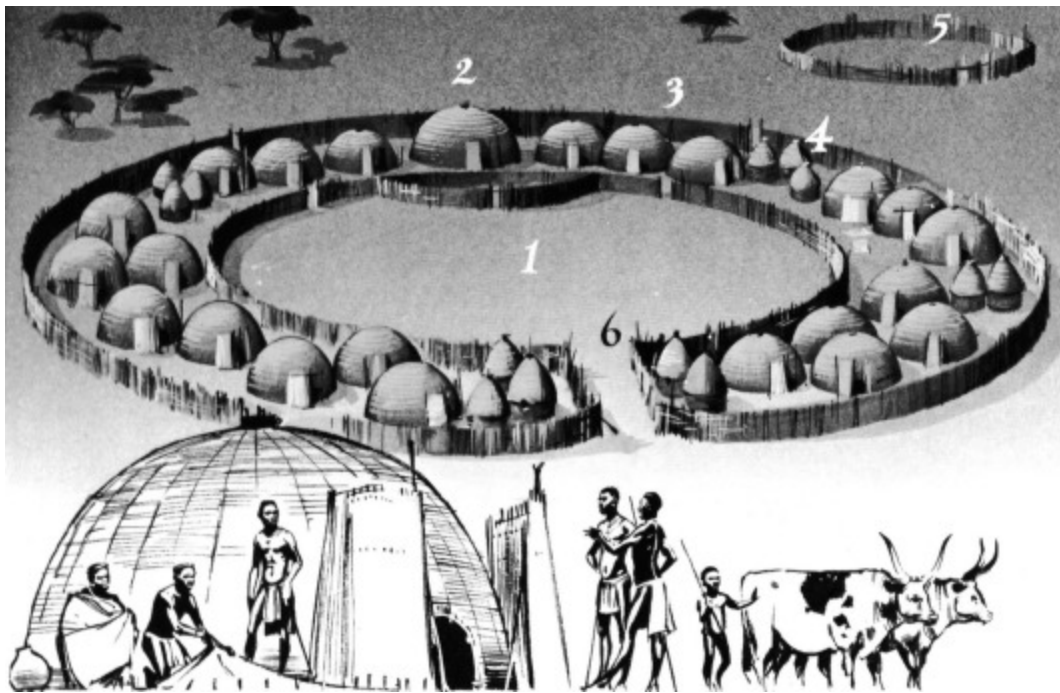


Fig. 5.3.3: An illustration of a Zulu village (umuzi). Circular or oval in plan with a large enclosure. 1. – cattle enclosure. 2. – Chief's hut. 3. – Chief's wife quarters. 4. – Storage. 5. Goat kraal. 6. Main entrance (Google, accessed 22/12/2017)

All amaZulu settlements were organic in form with the entrance opposite the highly fortified Royal Enclosure called Isigodlo (See Fig. 5.3.2 and 5.3.3). The civic space was at the centre where military parades and other civic ceremonies were held.

### 5.3.2 The Warrior Nation – The Mthwakazi psyche

The roots of the Ndebele Kingdom lie in present day KwaZulu-Natal when Mzilikazi, son of Mashobane, broke away from Shaka's Zulu nation in 1822. This was precipitated by Mzilikazi's refusal to hand over the cattle he had raided in one of his most gainful forays into the ever expanding Zulu Kingdom.

The Khumalo chiefdoms of Mzilikazi's father and his uncles lay almost between the expanding empires of the two great rivals, Zwide and Dingiswayo (Rasmussen, 1977: 10). As their conflict escalated, the Khumalo clan was forced to choose a side. The ensuing war saw Dingiswayo defeated with Zwide murdering Mashobane who he suspected of supporting his rival. After the death of Dingiswayo, one of his more able



commanders, Shaka of the small Zulu clan, took control of the crumbling Mthethwa Empire (Rasmussen, 1977: 12). These historical developments led to a 16-year northward journey that culminated in Mzilikazi settling and building a nation in Matabeleland in modern-day Zimbabwe.

Starting with a few hundred fugitives, Mzilikazi built himself an instrument of power, the army; and gave it a political meaning, the nation. This nation was a group of people that believed passionately in themselves, so much so that when they felt threatened by a power greater than their own, they did not hesitate to move into the unknown and build again in another land (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 61).

The initial group of Mzilikazi's Khumalo clan was joined by other Nguni fugitives, the most prominent of whom was Mncumbatha who joined in 1829. Mncumbatha was to play influential roles in Ndebele history, including the introduction of Robert Moffatt to amaNdebele affairs and the installation of Lobengula as King.

As yet there was no particular racial pride in being an Ndebele; Zulu, Swazi, Sotho, Kalanga, Shona and others came together. They were not bound together by any religious links and no special plot of earth held any mystical meaning for them. Their god was their nation and their prophet was Mzilikazi (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 61 - 62).

The power that Mzilikazi wielded over the Ndebele was that of a mystical personality who was also a veritable creator. This power lives on. A century after his death, his memory is still revered and no Ndebele and few white writers can be found that say anything against Mzilikazi (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 62).

Of all the extravagant praise names for Mzilikazi the truest was "*Umdabuli weSizwe*" – the Maker of the Nation (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 61). With respect to how he held the nation together, the common isiNdebele proverb holds that "inkosi yiNkosi ngabantu" (a king is a king because of people). This concept was briefly discussed in Chapter Four (See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dec., 2008).

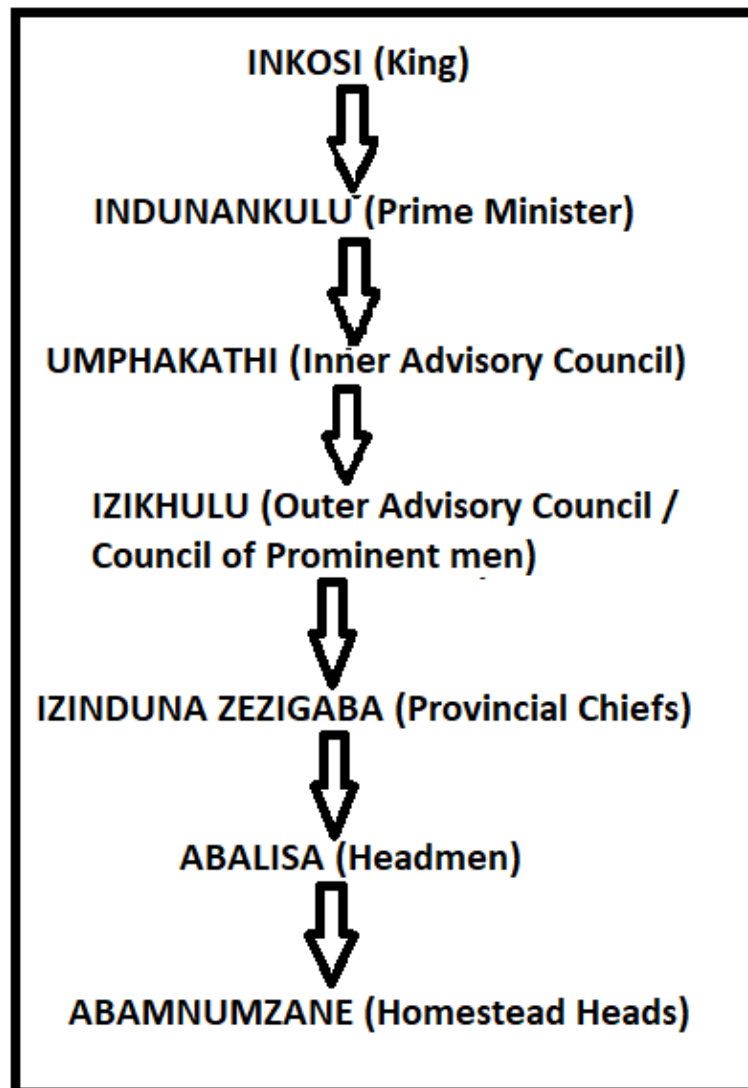


Fig. 5.3.4: The hierarchy of power in the Ndebele State (Adapted from Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Dec, 2008: 382)

Mzilikazi built a nation that has stood the test of time. He lived during one of the most turbulent periods in African history. Great kingdoms rose and fell within a single generation; wars of unprecedented destruction were fought; and the map of Southern Africa was radically altered. This period saw the rise of great leaders but Mzilikazi was the most successful. He outlived most of his major contemporaries – Shaka, Dingane, Matiwane, Sebetwane, Soshangane, Zwangendaba, Barends, Bloem, and Portgieter – and he built a nation which continues to grow today (Rasmussen, 1977: 46). It is this singular success that is embedded in the amaNdebele psyche and is suppressed by the current Shona hegemony in all spheres of life, including the built environment. Pragmatic Afrocentric values demand that both internal and external colonialism be exterminated. Both forms have caused untold, unimaginable suffering, with the

Rwanda and Gukurahundi (in Zimbabwe) genocides being typical examples. Genocide can occur with respect to culture and economic and political life and also with regard to built form.

### **5.3.3 AmaNdebele settlements**

The Ndebele migration from KwaZulu was marked by numerous settlements, including eNtubeni, eKuphumuleni, eMhlahlandlela, Mosega, eGabheni and eNtabazinduna (Fig. 5.3.5). They were normally built in elevated areas so that the cattle could be watched while grazing during the day (Rasmussen, 1978: 96) and approaching enemies could be sighted.

The Mfecane wars created nation builders and with the coming of the Europeans, further instability called for stricter security measures. This attitude was reflected in the Ndebele psyche and settlements as they moved northwards.

One of the largest settlements was eGabeneni (Fig. 5.3.6) where the Igabha regiment was stationed about 50 miles from the modern town of Zeerust on the left bank of Marico river in Marico District (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 61). One can see the similarities to amaZulu settlement planning – a feature that was carried through to settlements in Matabeleland under Kings Mzilikazi and Lobengula.

In the midst of almost constant warfare, Mzilikazi grew his kingdom such that by 1825 his armies were raiding as far away as southern Botswana and his kingdom was probably the most powerful and wealthy state on the plateau (Rasmussen, 1977: 17).

Since the amaNdebele was a military nation, most of the kraals were regimental (Fig. 5.3.7). Under King Mzilikazi and his successor Lobengula, the settlements fell under a centralised system. There were two types of military settlements:

- amadoda – two or three war-hardened regiments of married men; and
- amajaha – 500 young unmarried warriors of the same group that joined the regiments in their late teens and were not permitted to marry until after their mid-thirties.

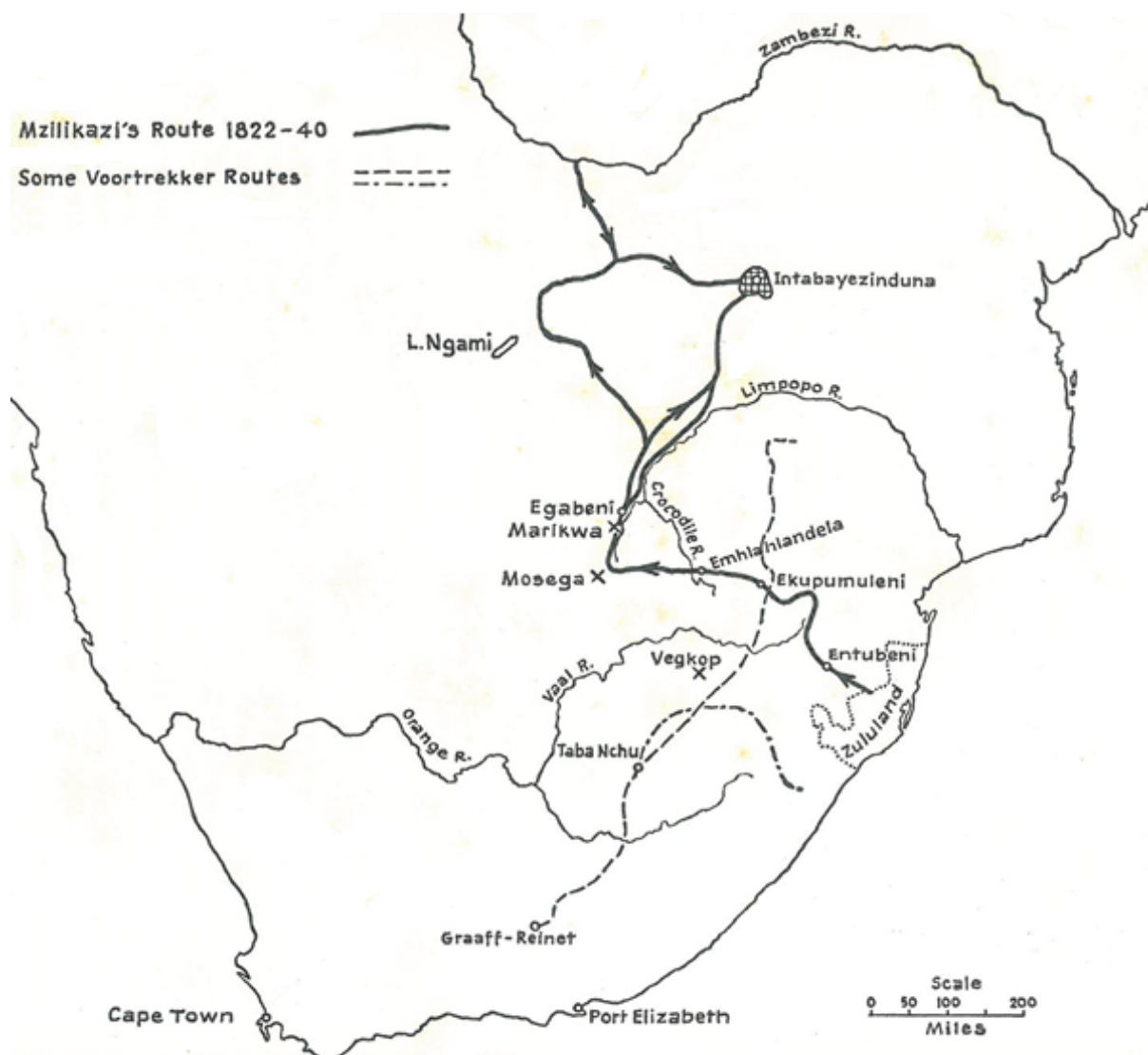
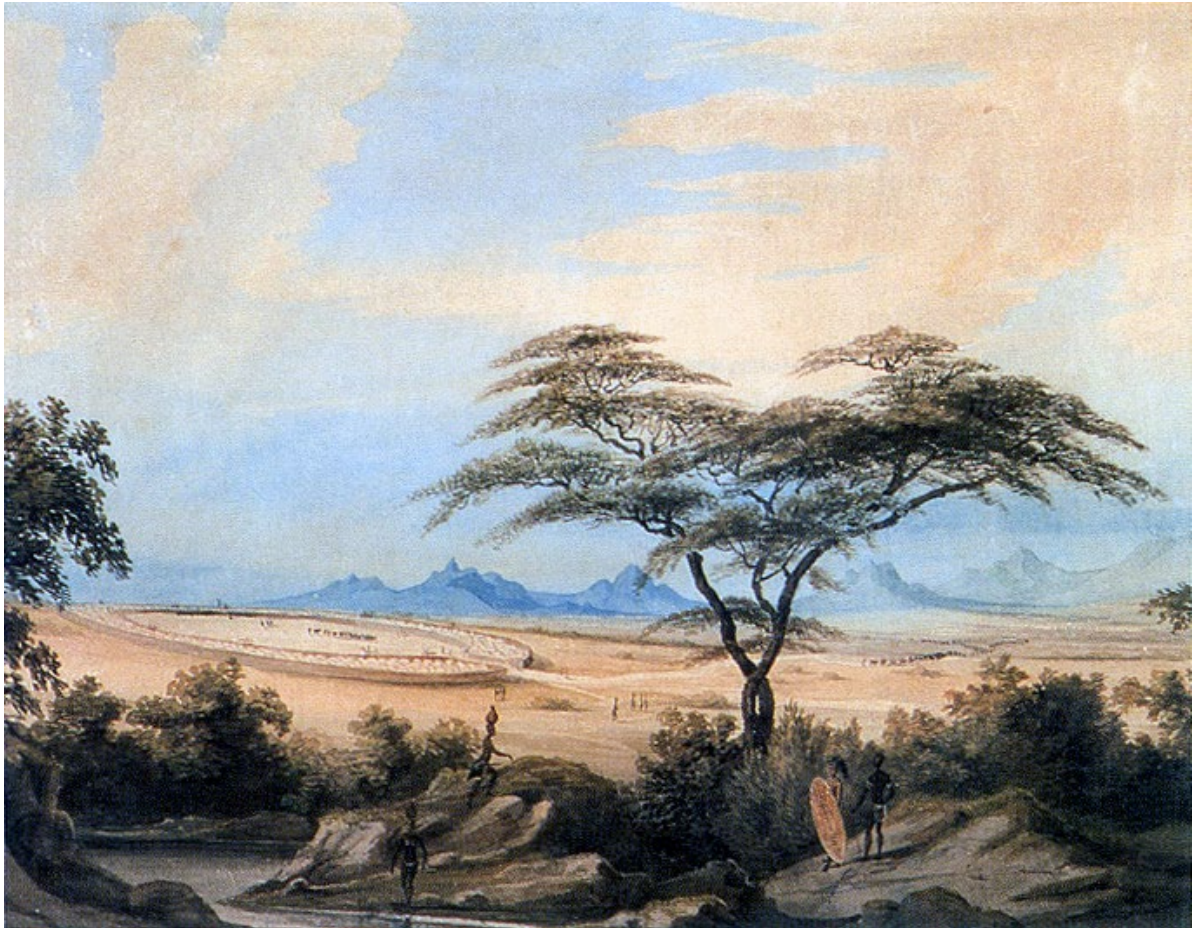


Fig. 5.3.5 - Movement of the Ndebele Kingdom into present day Zimbabwe (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 58)

The settlements had a basic common structure, but dimensions varied greatly. For instance, Bulawayo was an oval of 800 yards by 650 yards and Matsheamhlophe was 100 yards by 200 yards (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 37).

In terms of form, they varied from circular to oval. The granaries (iziphala) formed part of the outer stockade (uthango). The outer fence was interrupted at intervals by narrow gates (intshukuntshu) which gave access to the enclosures (izibuya) containing threshing floors (iziza) and grain baskets (izilulu), and to the bush beyond. The little gates were closed at night. There were also four main gates (amasango).



**Fig. 5.3.6 - Mzilikazi's Royal Settlement of eGabeni, as depicted by William Cornwallis Harris, 1836**  
 (Source: William Cornwallis Harris (2 April 1807 (baptised) - 9 October 1848) - "Stamme & Ryke", deur  
 J.S. Bergh, in Samewerking met A.P. Bergh. Don Nelson: Kaapstad. 1984) (Wikipedia, the free  
 encyclopaedia, Accessed 22 August, 2016: 3:50pm)

Within the stockade there were several circular lines of huts depending on the size of the settlement. The first circle consisted of kitchen huts (*imikulu*), followed by residential huts where the warriors and their wives lived (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 37). Children were accommodated near the centre in the circle of huts (*amaziba*) closest to the stockade. Between these huts and the inner stockade was a passage (*umkhandlo*). The town crier (*imemezi*) ran along the passage when general announcements were made (*ibid*).

The first amaNdebele to arrive in modern day Matabeleland built beehive structures. By 1876, when Lobengula was king, they were building cone on the drum structures. The primary civic space was the great central court (*umdanga*) where public



ceremonies were held, including military parades and justice was administered – this was based on the system in KwaZulu.

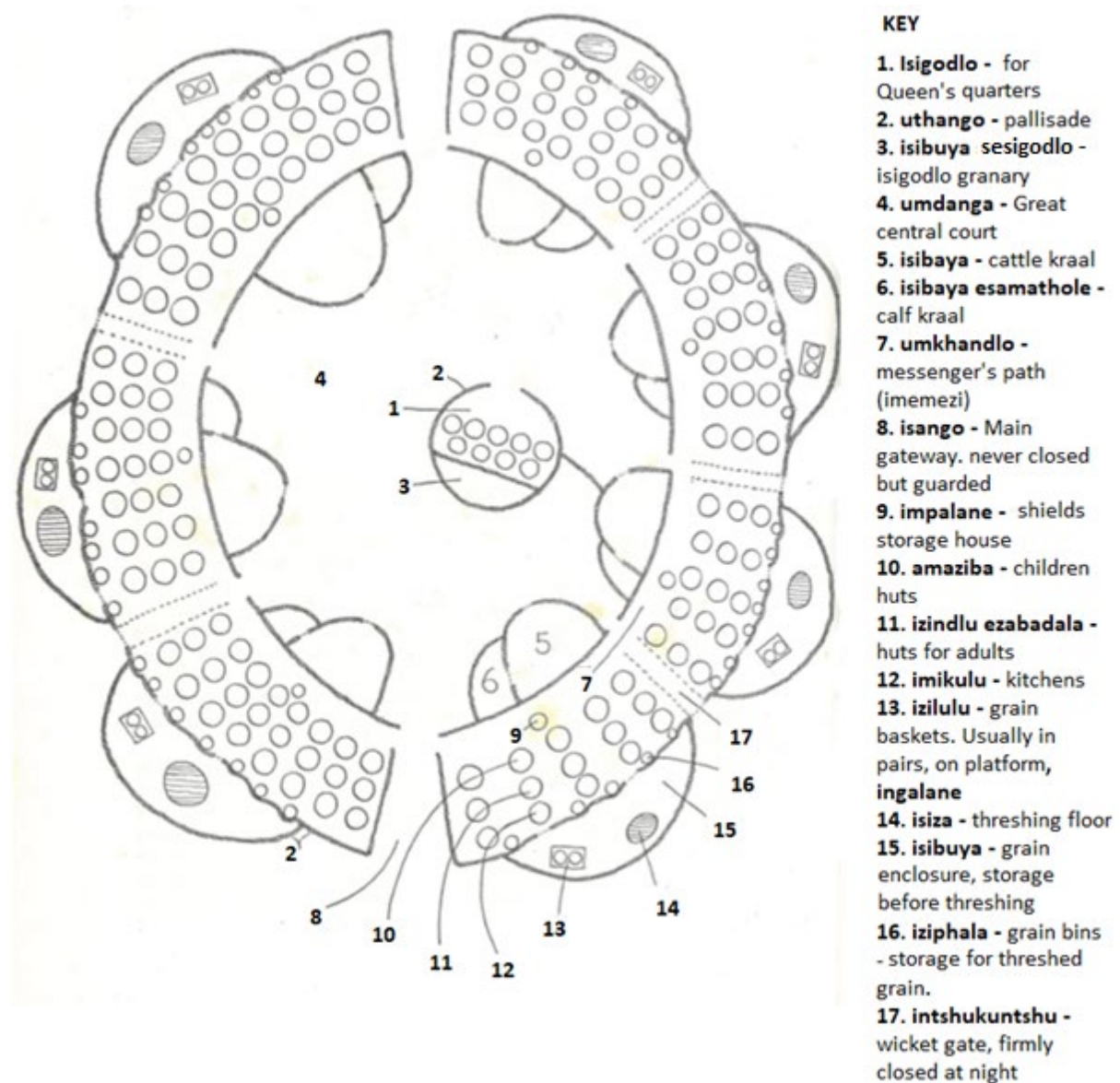


Fig. 5.3.7: Typical plan of an amaNdebele Settlement (Adapted from: Summers and Pagden, 1970: 38)

Dingiswayo turned traditional circumcision classes into military schools. These schools were comprised of 30 to 40 boys but were consolidated in a single centre called “ibutho” – a gathering. With the introduction of military training, soldiers “ibutho” were produced that were organised into regiments. Dingiswayo produced homogeneous groups which could be expected to out-throw and out-last groups with men of mixed ages; it was left to Shaka to invent new ways of using them (Summers and Pagden, 1970: 56). Shaka Zulu is credited with introducing new weaponry that

required new fighting techniques. He came up with the famous “chest-and-horn” (Fig 5.3.8). As Shaka’s trusted commander, these techniques and weaponry were inherited by Mzilikazi.

Today the warrior spirit lives on among the amaNdebele.

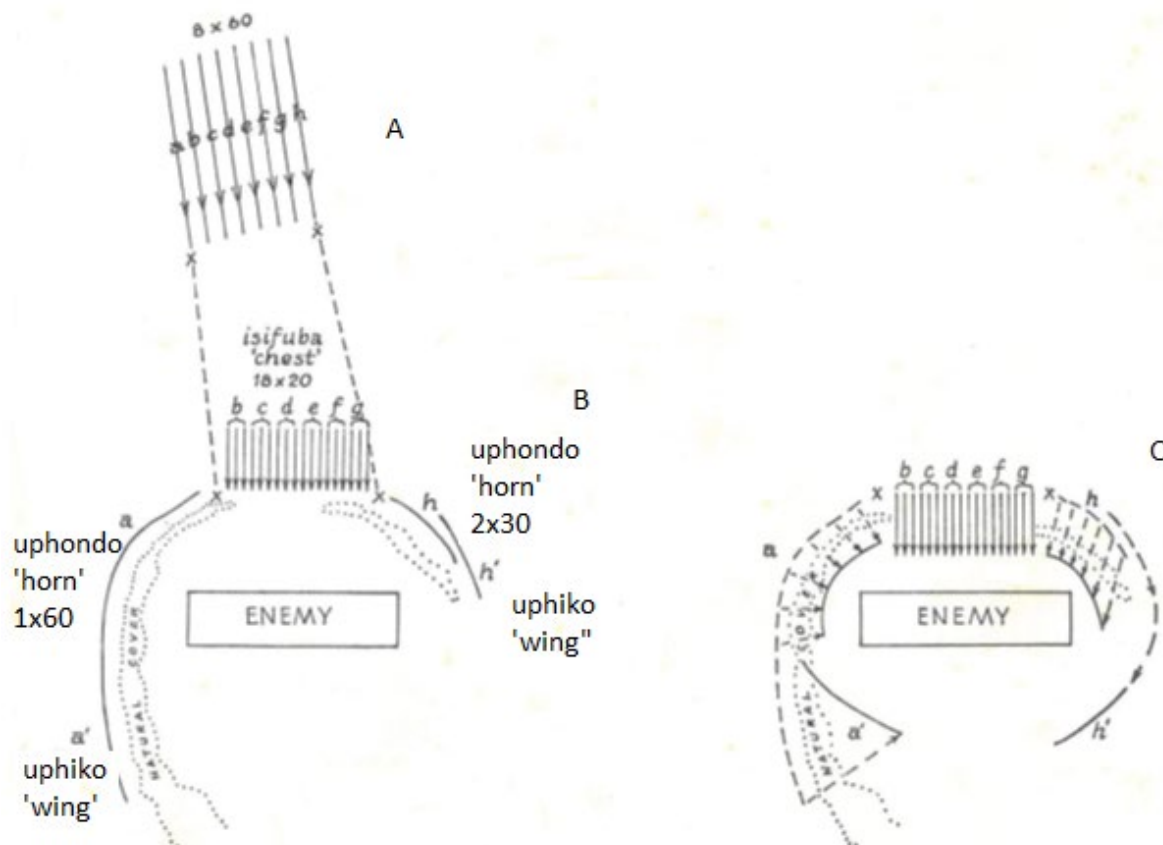


Fig. 5.3.8: A sketch of chest-horns tactics (adapted from: Summers and Pagden, 1970: 57)

When the amaNdebele settled in Matabeleland in 1840, Lobengula was a small boy who lived in a settlement called eMhlahlandlela under indunankulu uGwabalanda Mathe. Gwabalanda supported Lobengula’s succession in 1870 (Bhebe, 1977: 14). In 1853 a new regiment called Amahlokohloko was formed under one of the Hlabangana chiefs and Lobengula was one of its first members (ibid). This early association with the Hlabangana clan may have influenced Lobengula to marry Lotshe Hlabangana’s daughter. Lotshe was to be one of Lobengula’s most trusted friends and advisors.



In isiNdebele, ezansi literally means the geographic south, while enhla means north. Lozwi is a form of ethnic identity of a branch of Shona people who belonged to the Rozvi state that dominated the south-western part of Zimbabwean plateau prior to the arrival of the Ndebele (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 34). This implies that at some point, the Ndebele nation categorised people according to where they came from, with the abeZansi (those from the South) forming an aristocratic grouping, the abeNhla (those from the North), constituting a second layer and those assimilated from the Rozvi state forming the Hole grouping (ibid).

When Mzilikazi passed away in September 1868, he left no nationally recognised successor and this resulted in a succession battle led by uMbiko kaMadlenya. The search for Mzilikazi's rightful heir, Nkulumane, was unsuccessful. Mncumbatha Khumalo, who was discussed earlier, felt duty bound to explain this situation to the nation. He said that Nkulumane had been executed on charges of insubordination together with other indunas on Mzilikazi's reunion with Gundwane Ndiweni's group after their separation in Ngwato territory in 1938. Mbiko, the commander of the Zwangendaba regiment, was one of those who rejected this explanation.

Lobengula won the civil war and his coronation took place in February 1870. From February to the end of May, 1870, Lobengula and the former members of the triumvirate tried to invite the rebel leader to Gibixhegu, the new capital, for talks (Bhebe, 1977: 21). Mbiko and his Zwangendaba regiment turned down the gesture and this culminated in civil war. After the defeat of the rebels, Lobengula ordered them to relocate to near koBulawayo, his new capital, between December 1870 and August 1871 (Bhebe, 1977: 22). It is this new capital of Bulawayo (Fig. 5.3.9) that is the most famous and that led Europeans to design the contemporary city near the historical settlement.



**Fig. 5.3.9: Bulawayo town layout showing cattle enclosure in the 1890s (Source: Shillington, 1995: 263)**

Lobengula's Bulawayo (Fig. 5.3.9) had all the attributes of an amaNdebele settlement. It was organic in plan with palisaded huts and a central court for military parades and national celebrations.

#### **5.3.4 King Lobengula's formalisation of the Mthwakazi State**

Many unenlightened Zimbabweans subscribe to the notion that a call for Mthwakazi self-determination is a unilateral declaration of independence. In reality nothing could be further from the truth as the existence of a pre-colonial Mthwakazi state is a historical fact. The scramble for Africa created a checkerboard of states, almost all of which exist in that form to this day. However, there are a few exceptions, including present day Zimbabwe which started as two states of the British Protectorate, namely, Mashonaland and the Kingdom of Mthwakazi. In 1923, an Order in Council – a dubious colonial instrument enforced through the barrel of a gun with questionable legal force – merged them to form Southern Rhodesia (Mapheduka, June, 2018: 1).

As noted earlier, the process of subordinating Mthwakazi began much earlier than the 1893 invasion of the territory. The question is: how did Mthwakazi become part of Mashonaland? This was achieved through an invasion by a mercenary military force

financed by the British and the subsequent creation of Southern Rhodesia, after the 1919 Land Conference when the State of Mthwakazi was declared defunct and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council declared that Queen Victoria had succeeded King Lobengula. However, the King's kingdom and all that it represented it were not restored. This included land and hundreds of thousands of cattle that were expropriated through the Matabeleland Order in Council, the instrument that changed Mthwakazi to Matabeleland (*ibid*).

The final stage of the colonisation of Mthwakazi was achieved in 1923 after a whites-only referendum in both Mashonaland and Mthwakazi (*ibid*). This sorry state of affairs had its roots in the Berlin Conference of 1885 where the colonial powers drew boundaries of their territories across the globe with a heavy price paid by Africa, including Mthwakazi.



**Plate 5.3.1: Sir Leander Starr Jameson after whom the Jameson Line was named (Maphenduka, June 2018: 1)**

The conference aimed to draw boundaries so as to minimise conflict between the colonisers. King Mzilikazi's force was composed of 500 warriors when it left Kwa-Zulu and included an estimated 15 000 men by the time it fully settled in Mthwakazi. A border line was drawn between Mthwakazi and Mashonaland and this became known as the Jameson Line (Fig. 5.3.1), after Leander Starr Jameson.

The Jameson Line was protected by establishing garrisons to forestall its violation by Lobengula's impis who were in the habit of carrying out raids for grain and young men and women. From 1838, Mzilikazi built a formidable military kingdom by incorporating

all the tribes in the kingdom's sphere of influence under the policy of *isizwe kase lukwe* – let the nation be knitted together irrespective of its tribal components (*ibid*).



Fig. 5.3.10: The Mthwakazi boundaries established by King Lobengula before the invasion of Mthwakazi territory in 1893 by the British colonialists (Google Maps, accessed November 2017)

The Mthwakazi territorial boundaries (Fig. 5.3.10) are internationally recognised and Lobengula set the basis for the arguments put forward by various groupings that are currently advocating for Mthwakazi restoration. King Lobengula signed various treaties that set the Mthwakazi boundaries: the South Africa border was signed for in 1887, Botswana-Ramothabane signed in 1888, Zambia-Livingstone in 1888 and Mashonaland-Muzwezwe River in 1891.

The arrival of European hunters and gold prospectors heralded the end of the amaNdebele Kingdom with the first violent encounter experienced in the First Anglo-

Ndebele War of 1893, followed by the Second Anglo-Ndebele War of 1896. Unlike in previous confrontations, mostly south of the Limpopo River, the amaNdebele nation could not effect a wholesale movement of the nation northwards when faced with a greater threat. This spelt its demise with the whole settlement burnt down. At the battle of Gadade (Mbembesi) the amaNdebele army which had once been mighty in war was broken and the King died – the mountain had fallen (Summers and Pagden, 1970:138).

The disappearance of King Lobengula is captured in Ndebele national memory in a song commonly sung at today's soccer stadiums:

Kudala kwakunganje  
Umhlab'uyaphenduka  
Kwakubus'uMambo lo Mzilikazi.  
Sawela uTshangane,  
Saguqa ngamadolo  
Inkosi uLobengula yasinyamalala.

(The world is changing, things were not like this in the olden days.  
The reigning kings were Mambo and Mzilikazi.  
But when we fought at Tshangane River,  
And we fell on our knees,  
King Lobengula then disappeared.)  
(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 41)

The old amaNdebele virtues did not die: dependability, steadfastness, courage and endurance which comprise iqhawe (hero) persist in the contemporary amaNdebele psyche – a very rich source for Afrocentric built forms.

The Mthwakazi nation preserved its Nguni heritage throughout its journey from present-day KwaZulu-Natal to the settlements built in present-day Matabeleland. These settlements drew on the basic defence morphology that reflected the events of the times. The Mfecane heightened Ndebele consciousness of security; this was

reflected in settlement planning. Security was located at the centre of the settlement (army parade space) alongside the economic (cattle) system.

This section discussed the precolonial Ndebele condition and its attendant built form. The following section investigates colonial and postcolonial conditions with regard to social arrangements and built form.

#### 5.4 MTHWAKAZI DARK AGES: Bulawayo's colonial built environment

When the Berlin Conference set out to partition Africa there was no consideration of the ethnic complexities that existed on the continent. The Europeans' primary consideration was Africa's natural resources. Similarly, in decolonising the continent, there was no consideration of post-colonial conditions. This resulted in most African countries' decolonisation processes being left incomplete or inappropriate for nation building. In most instances, this was deliberate so as to cause confusion and continue to plunder the continent's natural resources through divide and rule policies. Countries were handed over to leaders who used the concept of majority rule to oppress minorities. This section examines a classic example of an inappropriate decolonisation process, the case of Matabeleland and the Midlands (Mthwakazi). It begins with a discussion on colonial architecture in the region.

As noted earlier, Mashonaland was colonised when the settlers finally reached Fort Salisbury and raised the Union Jack on 12 September 1890 (Wills, 1985: 142) as part of their northward expansion. Rhodes was the architect of the colonisation of Ndebele country that was achieved through a series of treaties and concessions, including the Rudd Concession that was signed in October 1888.

The occupation of Mashonaland was carried out against Lobengula's will and precipitated a series of events that led to the first Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 and a subsequent rebellion in 1896. The rebellion forced the whites into a negotiated settlement with the resultant passive resistance later blossoming into modern nationalism, which continued to linger among the Ndebele people (Bhebe, 1977: 48).

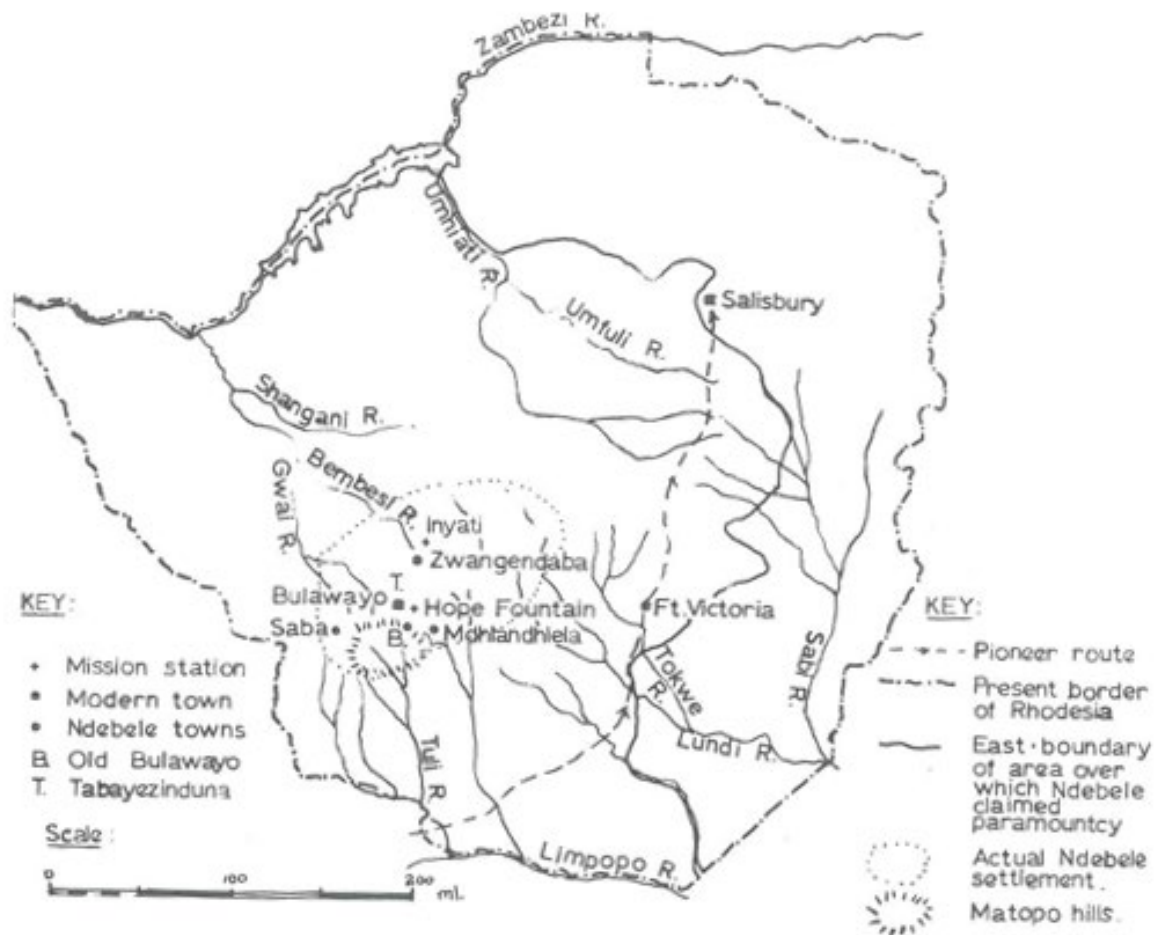
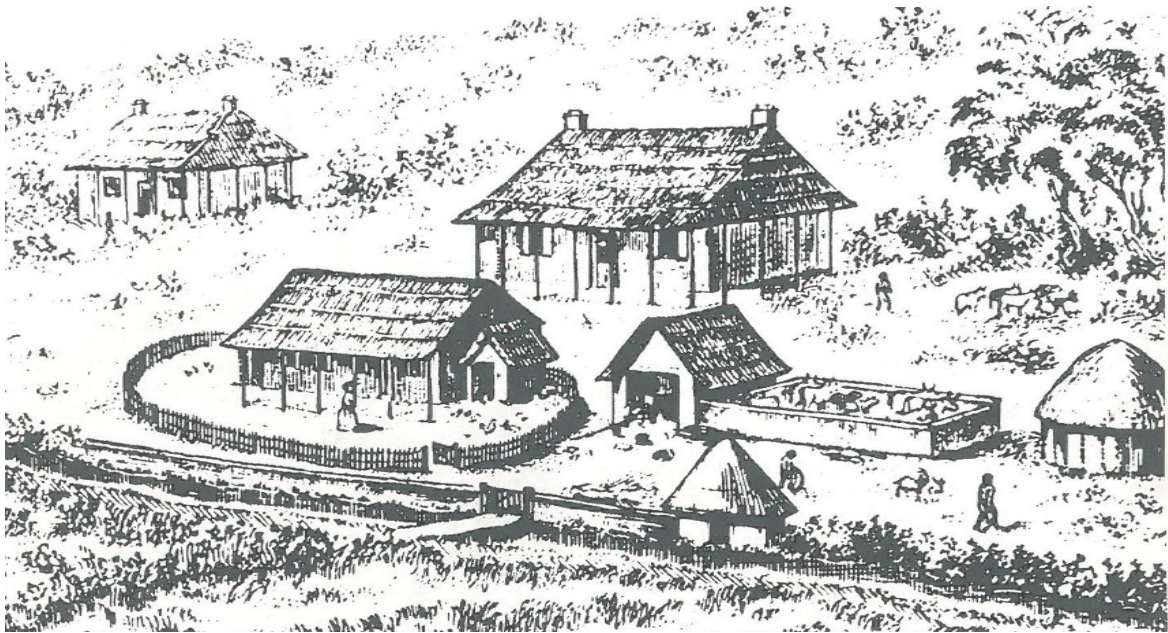


Fig 5.4.1: Ndebele settlements in the nineteenth century (Bhebe, 1977, 38)

With respect to architectural developments, as was observed with regard to the settlers in Fort Salisbury (Harare), the European missionaries first settled in Inyathi and their architecture consisted of rectilinear structures with some influenced by local architecture (Fig. 5.4.2). Robert Moffat was one of the early European missionaries to make contact with the Ndebele Kingdom and was a very close friend of King Mzilikazi. The architectural forms were transformed from dome on drum to cone on drum influenced by geographic, climatic and local cultural factors.





**Fig. 5.4.2: Inyathi Mission founded by Robert Moffat in Matabeleland in about 1862 (Rasmussen, 1977: 42)**



**Fig. 5.4.3: The house built for Lobengula by John Halyet at Old Bulawayo about fifteen miles south of the present-day city, near Old Criterion Mine, shows the early influences of Western built forms on the amaNdebele way of life of the 1880s (Jack and Bolze: 1979: vi)**



The first permanent European-style home to be established near Bulawayo was the Mission Station at Inyathi built in 1959 by John Smith Moffat, Thomas Morgan Thomas and William Sykes of the London Missionary Society (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 2) (Fig. 5.4.2). The architectural and cultural influence of the European settlers influenced King Lobengula's settlements in Bulawayo (Fig. 5.4.3), with the introduction of rectilinear built forms that contradicted the amaNdebele worldview.



**Fig. 5.4.4: An artist's impression of Hope Fountain Mission as it looked in 1890 (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 3)**

Hope Fountain Mission founded in 1870 by Rev. J. B. Thomson, who was succeeded by Rev. C. D. Helm, stood near King Mzilikazi's Royal Kraal and was the earliest building to be occupied by whites near modern Bulawayo (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 3). Again, this building form was rectilinear and stood in contrast to amaNdebele circular forms. The three buildings just discussed were precursors of European dominance of colonial Bulawayo's built forms.

Years before the arrival of the 1893 Column at King Lobengula's Bulawayo, a small "colony" of resident white traders and visiting prospectors, concession-seekers, hunters and adventurers had sprung up in an area designated for them by the King,

to the east and south east of his royal residence (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 4). The continued influence of the European built form is seen in Fig. 5.4.5.



**Fig. 5.4.5: Showing Mr W. J. Wallenstein, editor of Bulawayo's first newspaper, *The Matabele Times*, on his horse with the typical pole and udaka, semi-permanent buildings erected on the first site of "white" Bulawayo (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 4)**

Historically there have been four Bulawayo settlements, the first by Shaka Zulu in KwaZulu, the second and third established by Lobengula and the fourth by Cecil Rhodes (Ranger, 2010: 14). The last three are in modern day Matabeleland.

The modern city of Bulawayo started as a shanty town with building materials being taken from Lobengula's vanquished seat of power. The city largely owes its existence to Rhodes' vision of establishing British trade from Cape to Cairo through a railway and telegraph line (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 1). Nonetheless, the city could not have been built in its current geographical location without the influence of the amaNdebele settlement of Old Bulawayo. Rhodes decreed that the new city be laid out on a flat plain three miles southeast of Lobengula's settlement, and that it should be a square mile in area, like Jerusalem, should have wide streets, a belt of parkland, and a surrounding circle of commonage (Ranger, 2010: 16). The Surveyor of the town, Patrick Fletcher, took into account existing geographical, social and political features as well as the land that was granted to John Colenbrander by Lobengula with the grid plan (Fig. 5.4.6) having little effect in changing these physical features (*ibid*). This

seemingly sensitive approach is deceiving, as a large part of the plan was a grid that is foreign to the indigenous peoples whom the surveyor purported to have taken into account. The politics of the day had a significant impact on the final product and these ideas persist in the city's physical planning to date as it is typical of ancient Roman towns or modern American ones. The only circular forms are vaguely reflected by the ring roads dominated by Masiye Phambili Drive and Cecil Avenue. Had the circular Bulawayo Commonage (Fig. 5.4.7) been followed throughout, the city form would have been totally different and more in line with the traditional amaNdebele settlements discussed earlier.

Two roads were constructed that symbolically displaced the Ndebele people from their land, Borrow Street and Lobengula Street. Captain Henry John Borrow was killed during the Shangani Battle whilst in pursuit of Lobengula (*ibid*). Lobengula Street marked the beginning of black settlements that were never taken seriously with regard to services and other amenities as opposed to the areas beyond Borrow Street that were settled by whites.

Modern Bulawayo was officially declared a new town on 1 June 1894 between the First Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 and the Second Anglo-Ndebele War of 1896. The settler newspaper, *The Bulawayo Sketch*, recorded that white discourse centred on rights claims, farm rights and loot rights (Ranger, 2010: 17).

It has become a truism in the urban historiography of Southern Africa that towns were a colonial creation; that whites controlled place and space, movement and residence; and that Africans lived in towns on sufferance and in bewilderment (Ranger, 2010: 25). This is the lived experience of many Africans, especially in the crossover from traditional, pre-colonial societies to colonial ones. With this development came the loss of self-worth and the setting in of hopelessness and thus the loss of cultural values and other facets of an African way of life. This loss was reflected in the built form.





Fig. 5.4.6: General Plan of Bulawayo Township, 1895 – 1896 (Ranger, 2010: 18)

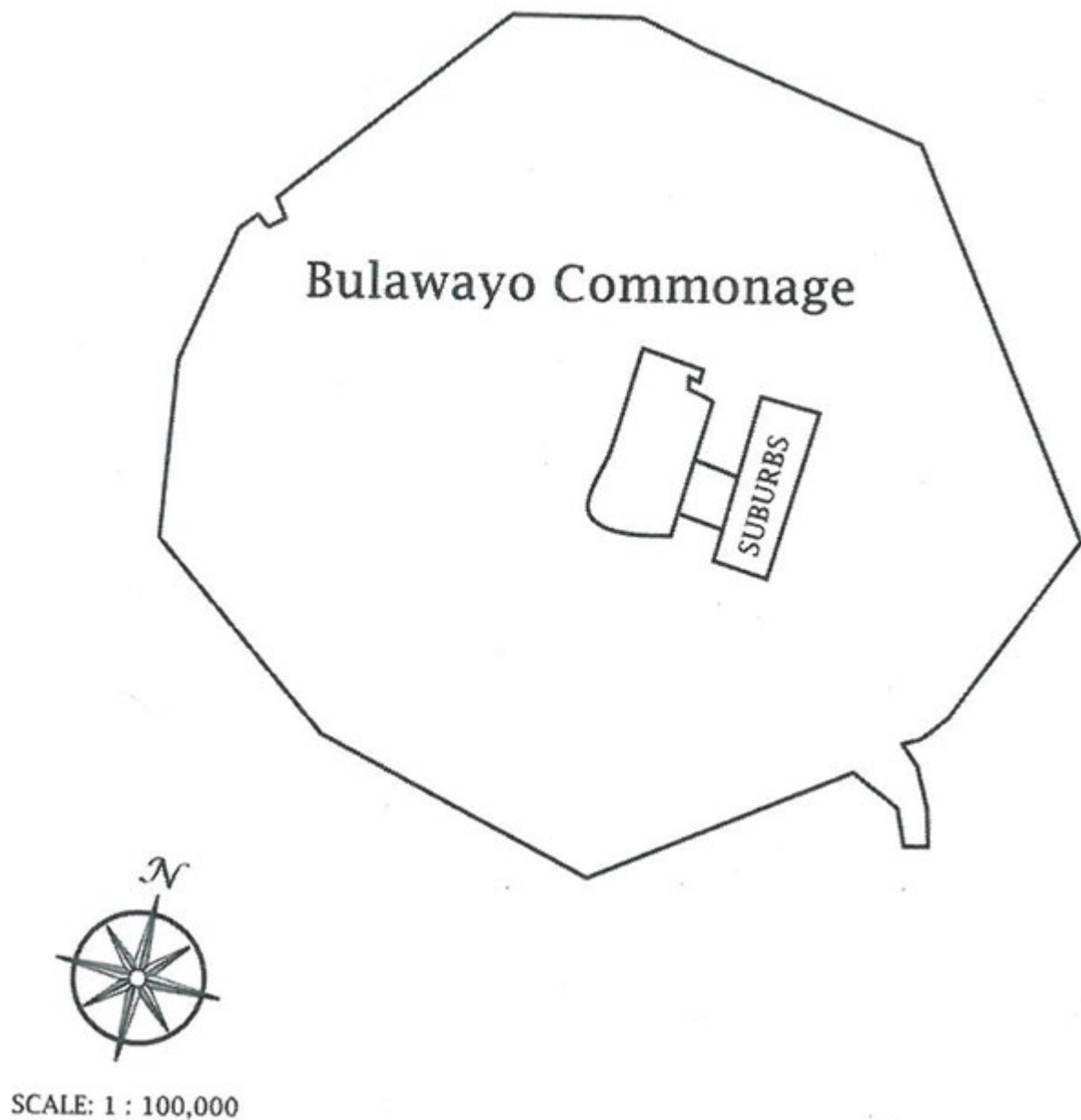


Fig. 5.4.7 – Bulawayo Commonage before the development of townships (Ranger, 2010: 19)

The way in which an African related to land, and his/her cosmological orientation, was either distorted or lost altogether. Thus, an African way of life in the locations was described as traumatic and chaotic (*ibid*).

The deceptively organic form of Bulawayo Commonage can only be noted through the city's popular ring roads – Masiye Phambili Drive and Cecil Avenue.

Development east of Lobengula Street that was touched on earlier began to take root and gave rise to the Old Location that is now called Makokoba (Fig. 5.4.8).

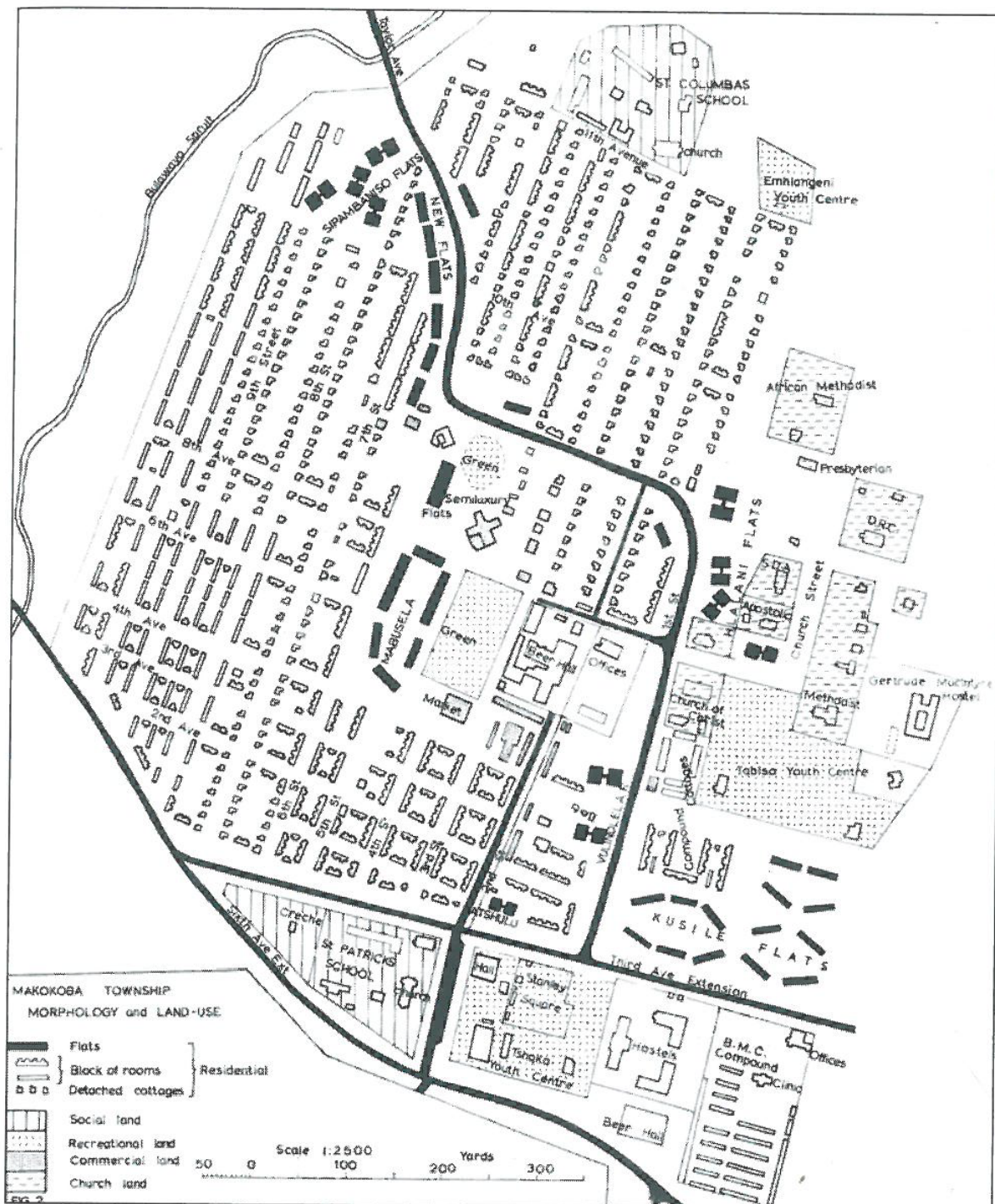


Fig. 5.4.8: Makokoba as it was in 1970 (Ranger, 2010: 21)

The location's residents were to later provide political leadership that gave rise to what this author would call the first phase of decolonisation of the Mthwakazi Region whose



largest city is Bulawayo. This study's focus is the Civic Centre which was designed to be the centre of white Bulawayo's civic life.

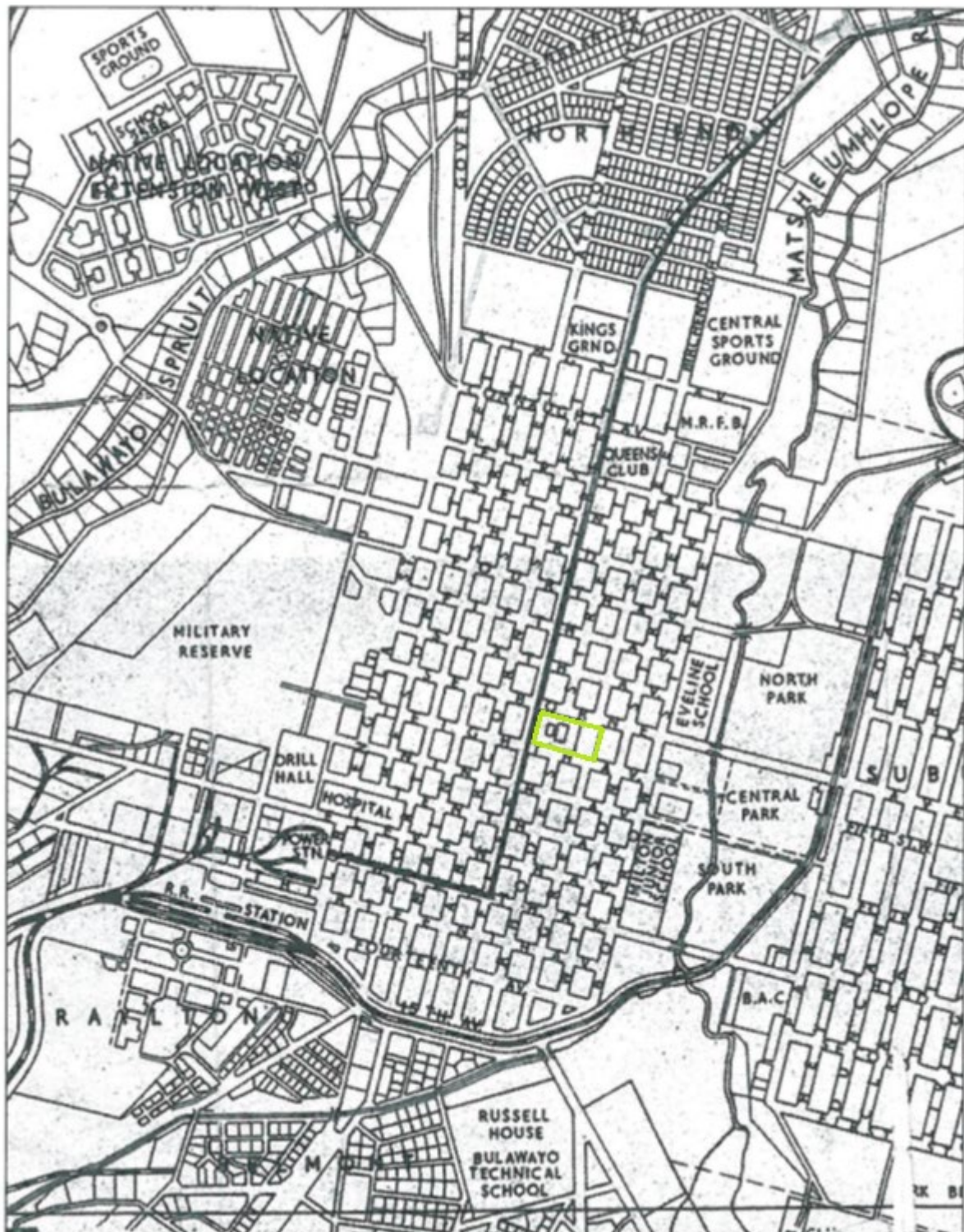


Fig. 5.4.9: Bulawayo and the Location to the west in the 1960s (Ranger, 2010: 20)

The dominance of urban Western design principles carried over into the architecture of the city, thus creating a truly colonial settlement.

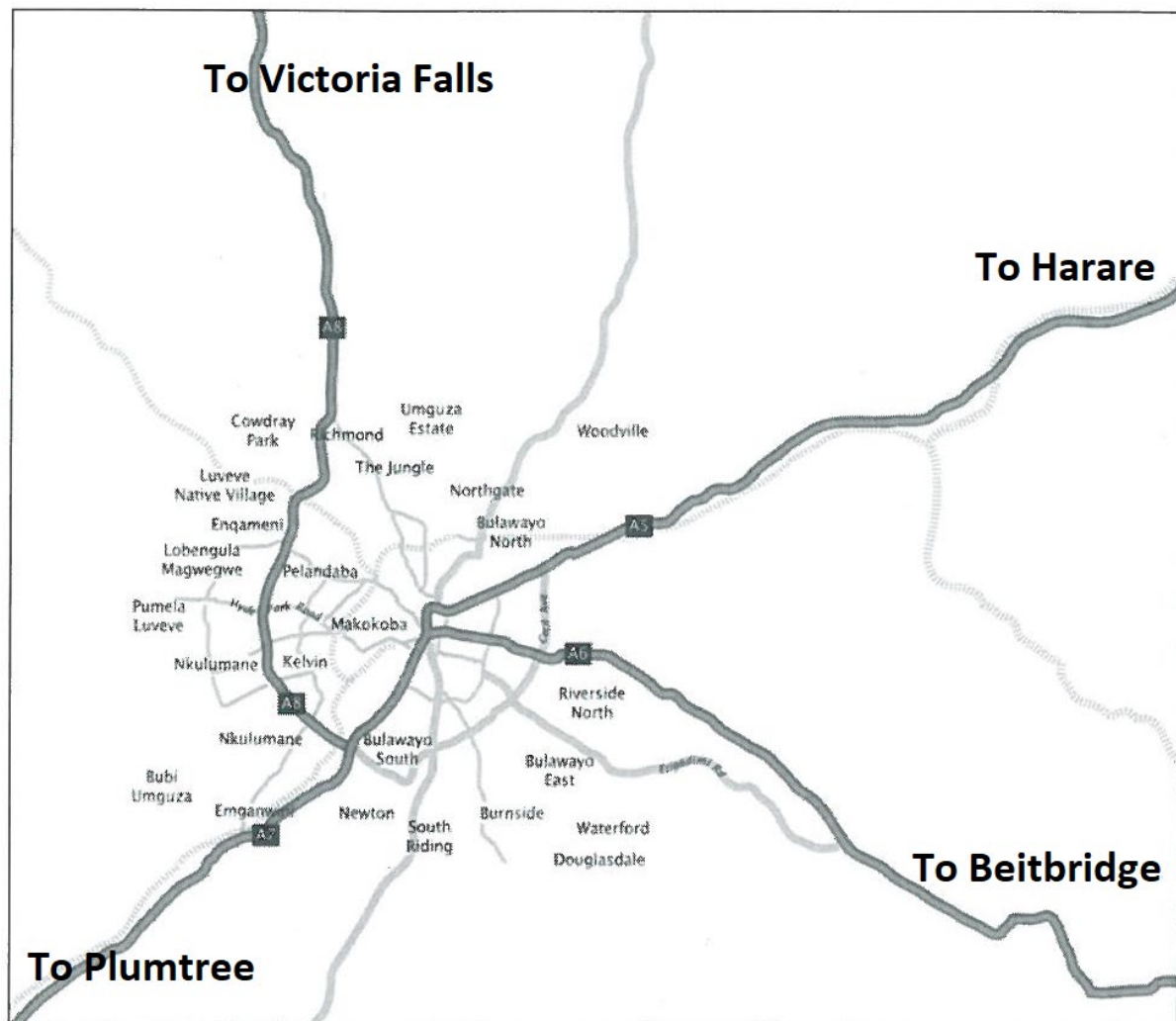


Fig. 5.4.10: Bulawayo and the Western Commonage in 2010 (Ranger, 2010: 22)

The images of the colonial city are preserved to this day, while the organic images of Ndebele settlements have become distant memory.

The modern city of Bulawayo is located at a vantage point in the sub-Saharan African region, and it forms the axis of an intelligently planned road and rail network to the north, south, east and west of Zimbabwe. The first train arrived in Bulawayo in 1897. By exploiting the region's immense natural wealth, the early colonial settlers turned Bulawayo into a boom town that was an important industrial hub of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) ([www.bulawayo1872.com](http://www.bulawayo1872.com)). While the railway system catered for the



European market, it gave Bulawayo an edge over other cities in the region, making it the commercial capital of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) for a long time until European rule ended and that of Mashonaland began.

Most of Bulawayo's buildings were based on British imagery and represented the colonisers' quest to create a home away from home. Bulawayo attained city status in 1943 ([www.bulawayo1872.com](http://www.bulawayo1872.com)) and its progressive policies put it far ahead of other towns and cities with respect to infrastructural development.



**Fig. 5.4.11: View into Dr J M Nkomo Street (Main Street) between 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Leopold Takawira Street (Selbourne Avenue) (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 11)**

The rectilinear forms of buildings accentuated the city grid. The building in the foreground in Fig. 5.4.11 was used as a temporary venue for the Bulawayo Club when it opened on 8 April 1895 (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 11). The buildings in this figure represent the 1890s but as rapid development set in, architectural styles became more mixed, enabling the city to retain and maintain its character into contemporary times. An example is the Agency Chambers (Fig. 5.4.12) whose construction brought a sense of vibrancy to the CBD. Its tasteful lines lent distinction to the “big business” area of Dr J. M. Nkomo (Main) Street, between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues, inspiring confidence and a sense of permanence (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 83).



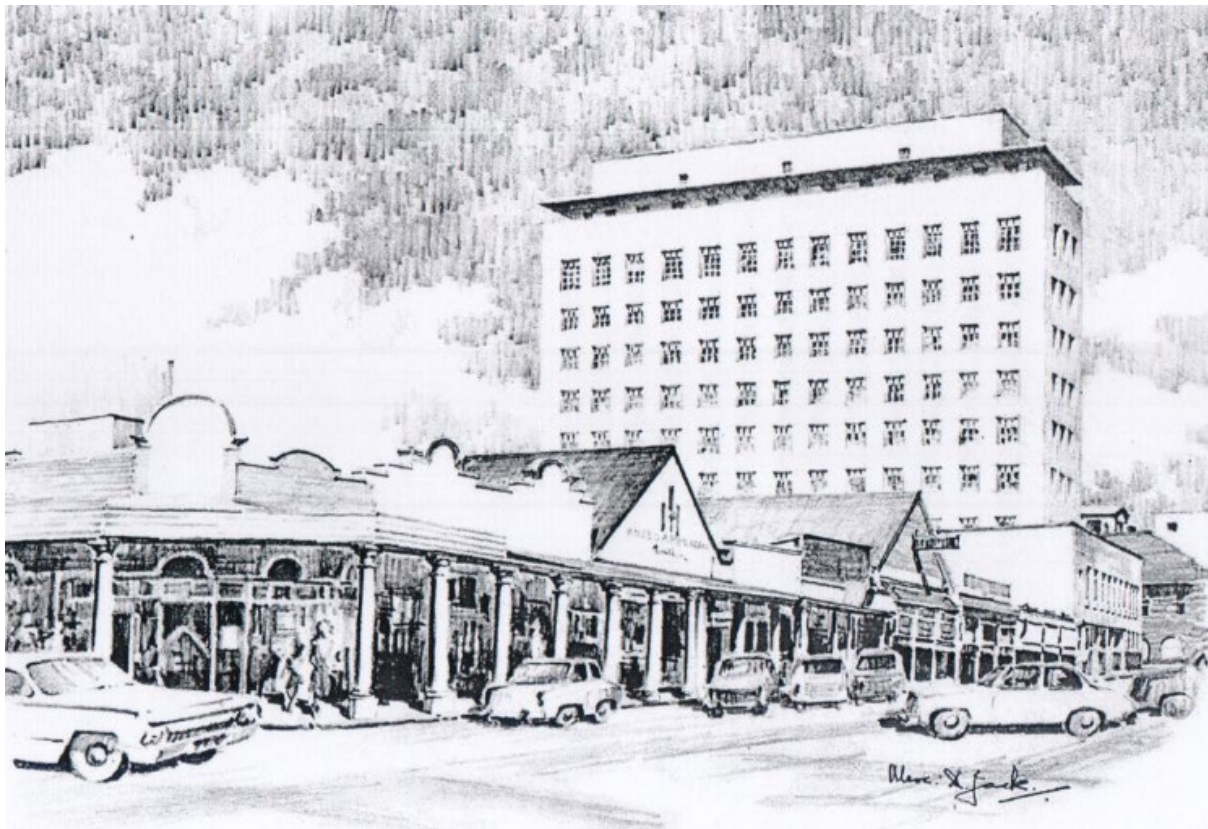
**Fig. 5.4.12: View along Dr J. M. Nkomo (Main) Street between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues in the 1920s showing the rugged silhouetted skyline introduced by the Empire Theatre and Albany House, etc. This is the east side on a south to north view towards the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 85)**

The Agency Chambers was constructed mainly in red Pasipas sandstone and the most commanding feature of its ornamental façade was its central colonnaded portico which rose to a height of two floors, with the vertical line continuing in the tallest of the three turrets, with their modest showing of cast-iron enrichments (*ibid*). Most of Bulawayo's cultural and social life centred around the corner of Dr J.M. Nkomo (Main) Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue where the Empire Theatre and Grand Hotel stood until recent changes.

More changes were to come as an increased number of high rise buildings sprouted around the city from the 1970s onwards, typified by Charter House (Fig. 5.4.13). This eight-storey building that occupies the corner of Leopold Takawira (Selbourne) Avenue and Fort Street and was completed in February 1957. The design was required to be restrained and dignified, in keeping with the prestige and standing of

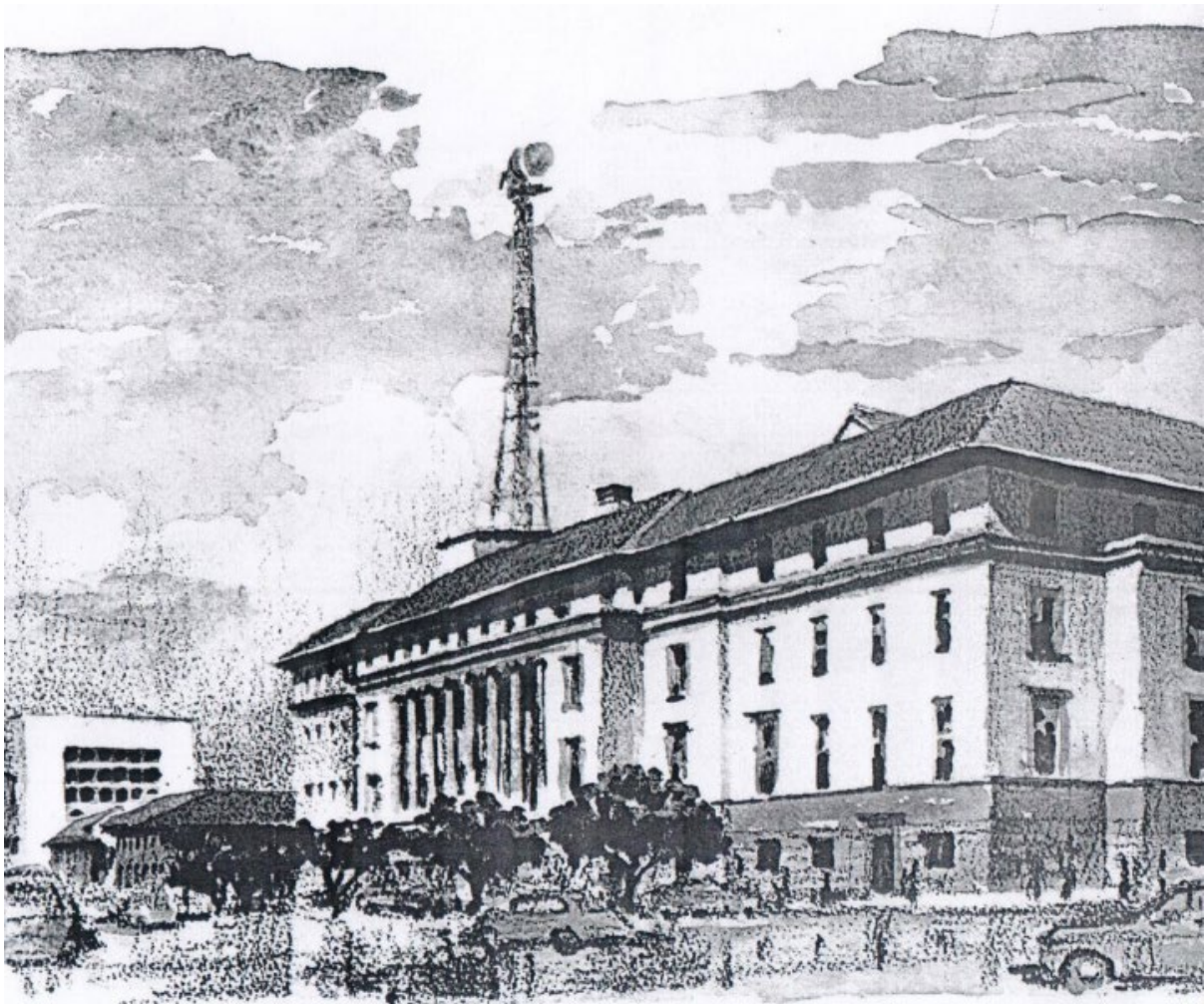


the British South Africa Company (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 114). The building's set back from the building line allowed for a small courtyard and a flag-staff.



**Fig. 5.4.13: Charter House is generally a shade of pink with a roof-top canopy, making it a landmark at one end of L. Takawira (Selbourne) Avenue (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 115)**

Sir Robert Tredgold, Chief Justice of the Federal Supreme Court from 1955 to 1960, Privy Councillor in 1957, and Acting Governor on a number of occasions, and his father, Sir Clarkson Tredgold, Attorney-General and member of the Executive and Legislative Councils of Southern Rhodesia in 1903 are commemorated in the Tredgold building. The building houses six Magistrates Courts, the Office of the Civil Commissioner and numerous other government departments. It is a free classical style with three banks of colonnades incorporating a total of 30 columns in the Ionic style (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 117). Its main entrance is on the splayed southwest corner of Fort Street and Leopold Takawira (Selbourne) Avenue. The building is diagonally opposite Charter House.

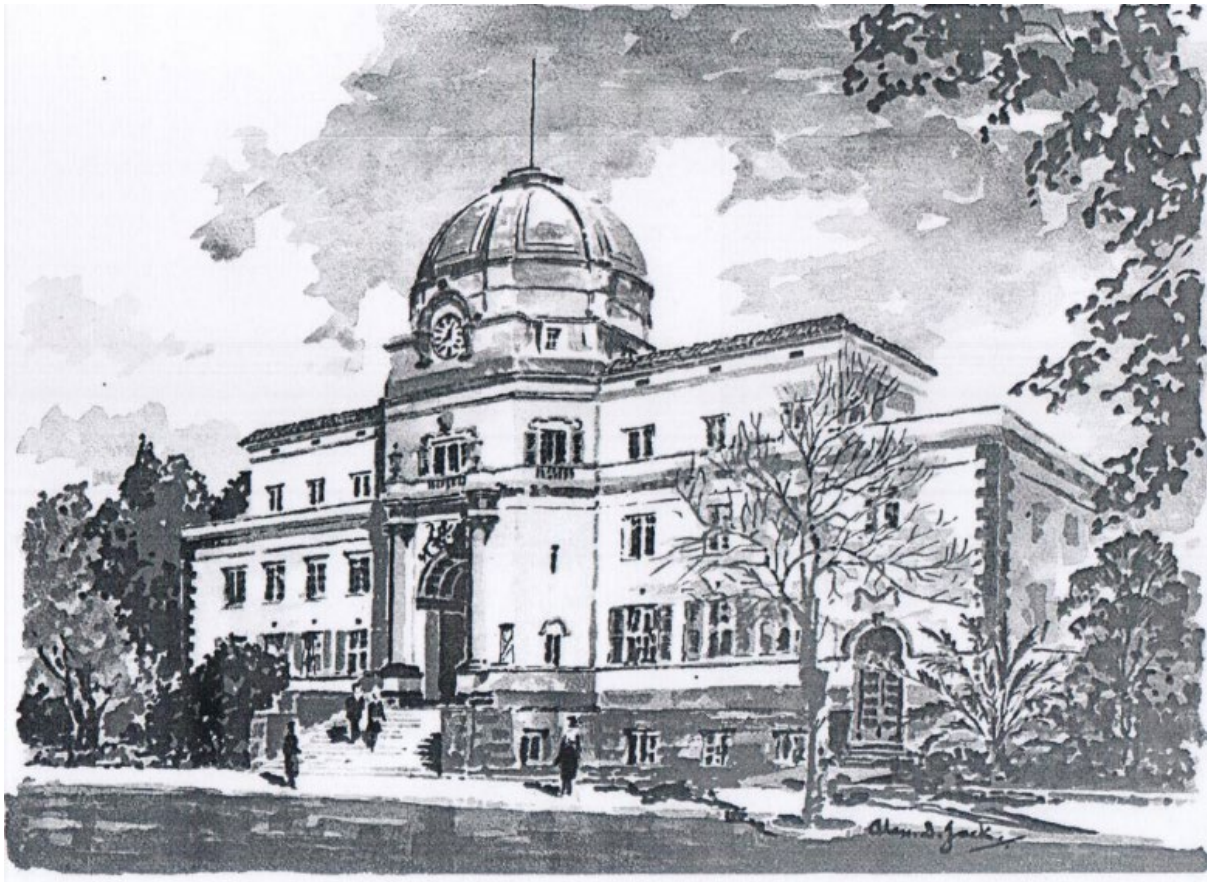


**Fig. 5.4.14: The Tredgold building viewed towards the Post Office and Compensation House (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 116)**

The other key colonial building in the city that caps its colonial ambience is the High Court (Fig. 5.4.15). This is the only building in the city with a dome and at the time of its completion in 1938 it was the tallest building. It has four storeys and is symmetrical in its front elevation, with its main entrance centrally placed below the dome with its clock (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 117). Charter House and the Tredgold building were designed by Public Works architects, while the High Court was designed by W. J. Roberts.

The buildings just discussed present the urban context in which the Civic Precinct is set. In the main, this centre is composed of the City Hall, the Tower Block and the Revenue Hall.





**Fig. 5.4.15: The High Court with its classical features and copper dome – the only dome in Bulawayo – terminates the view along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 118)**

Plate 5.4.1 presents the context of the High Court at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.



**Plate 5.4.1: The High Court provides vistas to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (Source: Google Maps, 31/03/2016 – 18:50)**

Besides the introduction of building forms that were not part of the pre-colonial setting in Mthwakazi, Europeans introduced Christianity, which also impacted on the built form



in Bulawayo. The first pioneers in Mthwakazi territory were the missionaries. Although they were preceded by the occasional ivory hunter, they sought to settle amongst the locals to preach the gospel, and establish schools and medical facilities. Thereafter, other religions established places of worship and cathedrals, mosques, and Hindu and Jewish temples were built at various times of the city's development.



**Fig. 5.4.16: Various religious buildings, including Jewish and Hindu Temples, Cathedrals and Mosques dotted around Bulawayo's Central Business District (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 135)**

The foundation stone of the present Cathedral of St John, (bottom right corner in Fig. 5.4.16), on the south-west corner of Rhodes Street/6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, was laid by the Duke of Connaught on 23 November 1910 (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 134). The building was completed in 1936 when the small spire was added to the original structure.

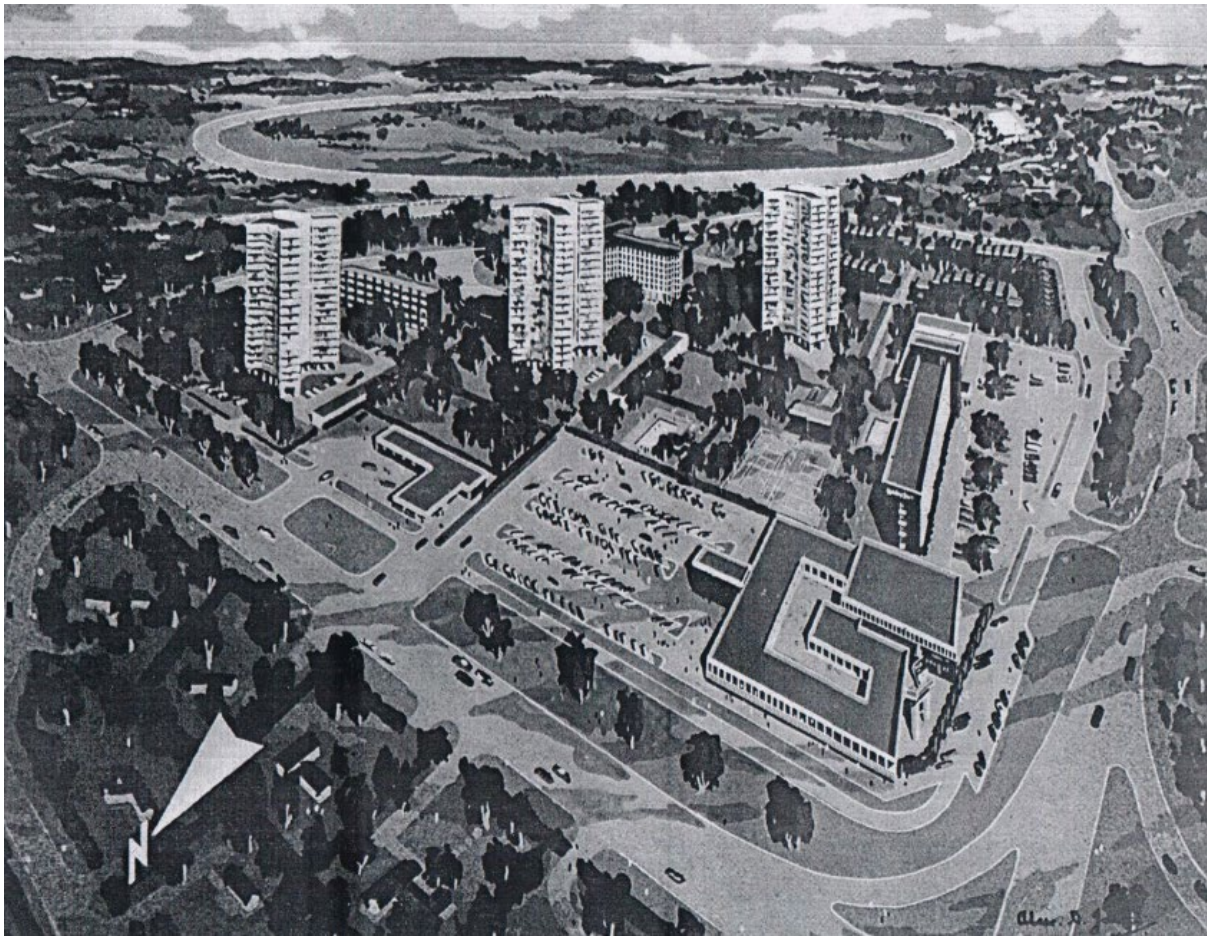
None of these structures took into consideration the African way of worship. Indeed, they marked total disregard for the African world view.

The skyline of Bulawayo witnessed a dramatic shift in 1972 on completion of the 18-floor Kenilworth Towers (Fig. 5.4.17) that is part of Ascot Centre Shopping Complex. The Centre was planned to include three tower blocks (with one eventually built), two five-storey blocks, a group of fifty-two town houses, and a shopping centre (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 148). This was the first of its kind at the time and was built close to the race course. This building is not in the CBD but can be seen from the bottom of Leopold Takawira (Selbourne) Avenue.



**Fig. 5.4.17: The multi-storey complex that comprised the Ascot Centre was to be the centre of entertainment in the Eastern suburbs around a race course (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 148)**





**Fig. 5.4.18: The proposed design with three towers with the race course in the background – a statement of modernity (Jack and Bolze: 1979: 133 - 149)**

The only completed tower had a core composed of lifts and foyers on each floor flanked by two crescents facing north and south. The race course itself was completed at the end of 1895 and was a sign of the permanency of European settlement.

The colonial architecture in Mthwakazi exemplified by that of Bulawayo was a half-hearted attempt to integrate with the local context with the site of contemporary Bulawayo being influenced by King Lobengula's settlement. Indeed, the streets were named using amaNdebele names. However, looking at a bigger picture, this was mere window dressing as the British mercenaries instructed by Rhodes invaded Mthwakazi territory in 1893 and their built forms were a recreation of those in their home country.

In countries such as Zimbabwe where colonial settlers found permanency, the challenge is to develop a more locally responsive built environment as part of the decolonisation process. This study aims to contribute to this quest.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

In the case of Mthwakazi, the buildings tell the story of the colonisers and their triumph over the amaNdebele Nation. In essence, the city of Bulawayo was planned for two peoples: the locals and Europeans. The former were provided with temporary shelter as the residential areas were designed for bachelors whilst the European suburbs were designed for permanency. The grid planning and rectilinear form were the dominant elements in the design of the CBD. The following chapter analyses and discusses isiNdebele built forms focusing on civic spaces.

# **CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: Bulawayo Civic Precinct**

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapters examined various theories and concepts as well as examples of how to draw inspiration from a given context to generate local identity in contemporary architectural and urban design. This chapter employs the data gathered from the fieldwork together with the background research to analyse and discuss the makings of Mthwakazi built forms and the Bulawayo Civic Precinct.

In the context of this research, the making of a place can be located in two categories: physical and spiritual. The next section discusses the spiritual component driven by the cosmological issues discussed in Section 4.2. The discussion is from a broad African perspective but is angled towards the amaNdebele context.

The key lesson from the fieldwork was where the study began: the centrality of African cosmology in human existence. Data analysis thus begins at this level – proverbially flying above, in the universe, and patiently clawing towards the target – mother earth – towards an amaNdebele worldview.

## **6.2 GROUNDED IN AFRICAN COSMOLOGY**

Understanding human beings and their existence begins with appreciating their minds and how the mind perceives the universe. Human beings generally define themselves in terms of how they perceive the cosmos and this moulds their cultures – the centredness concept discussed earlier gives credence to this phenomenon. The cosmology is the foundational model for life itself, without which there is no meaning to life. This implies that understanding a people's world view is fundamental to unpacking their culture. At this point, the study reverts to questions around human

existence. The search for the origins of human beings, where they came from and what their purpose is in the greater scheme of things underpins the study of cosmology. This study focused on the African due to the loss of identity brought about by colonialism and perpetuated by neo-colonialism in its various forms. In its quest to understand how built forms should be driven by local contexts so as to exude indigenous identities, it draws inspiration from the cosmos - an African perspective.

### **6.2.1 Relationship between the African mind and the cosmos**

With respect to the main question posed to key informants on what constitutes an Ndebele homestead/settlement, there were two primary points of departure: spiritual and physical. This section begins with the spiritual approach that was driven in the main by key informants Mr Pathisa Nyathi and X under the mantra “as above so is below” with its biblical version of “Let thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven” (Appendix: II). This approach is driven by a cosmological orientation that begins with the human mind itself. The physical approach is addressed in Section 6.3.

In the interview with Pathisa Nyathi (Appendix II), his point of departure was the mind. The mind sees the world around human beings. It develops ideas that are eventually transformed into art. In this particular case, architecture is part of art. Art carries the signature of the community in which the artist is situated as well as his/her personal attributes as an individual as he/she sees the world as opposed to others. The first important point is that the mind creates. Everything that human beings make, build, carve, draw, weave etc., was created by the mind, but one cannot see what exists in the mind. Ideas are translated by hands through production processes. Nyathi (Interview, June 2018) argued that, hands will do several things among others:

1. they will build. He stated that he is currently writing about Great Zimbabwe from a very different perspective. He argues that it is an art and no more;
2. they will mould. That is when talking of clay or pottery generally. Then...
3. they will also... paint or engrave.



The mind attempts to recreate the world or universe on earth: as above so is below. For an African this becomes an attempt to replicate heaven on earth. Mr Nyathi (interview, June 2018) added that an African's understanding of the universe is viewed from a different perspective at night where the skies become a chalk board with identified characteristics:

- Circularity – these are attributes of African beauty. Here the argument is that all that an African hand makes is beautiful. It stems from the fact that the lesson from the universe is that all objects are derivatives of a circle. The earth is a circularity derivative, so is the moon, the stars, etc. (Plate 6.2.4). The hand's creations are aligned to what the universe gives to the mind. Nature is all circular whether it is the human body, all of it is circular. There are no rectangular forms. No ninety degree angles. No straight lines. What is seen by Africans are curved lines.
- Movement – this attribute happens along an elliptical orbit – which is identical to circularity (Fig. 6.2.1). Movement is said to be regular, rhythmic, repetitive, periodic and predictable. Without these qualities of movement, earth would be desolate.
  - Periodicity is expressed by nature: day and night, seasons, life and death, etc.



**Plate 6.2.1: Blooming Jacaranda trees in spring** (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 7)



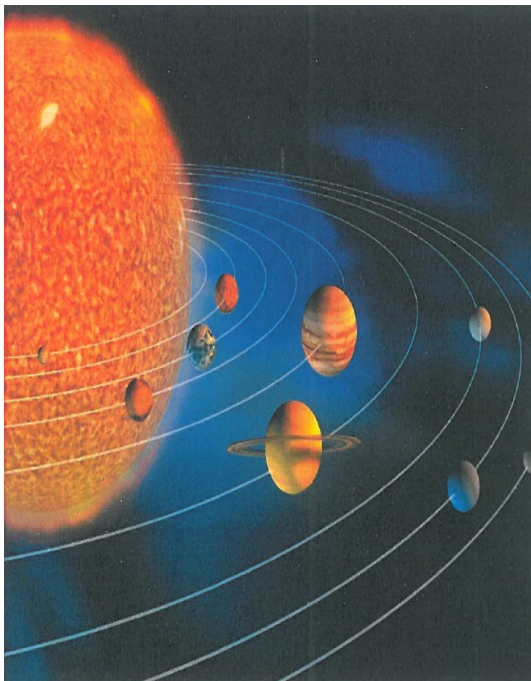
**Plate 6.2.2: Leafless Jacarandas in winter** (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 7)

- The moon and its phases do the same (Plate 6.2.3). The English word for moon is menses. The cycle for the moon and for women is 28 days. In many African languages, the phrase “a woman is on the moon” is used when she has her menstrual period. This is a cycle of life, of regeneration and rebirth, and rebirth, growth and development, death, rebirth. The

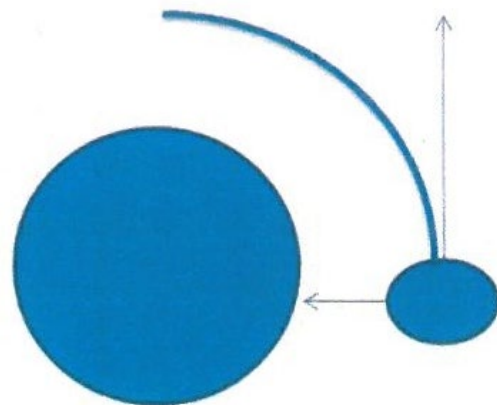
cycle begins again (Nyathi interview, June 2018; also see Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 54).



**Plate 6.2.3: Phases of the moon expressing repetition; Rebirth, growth and development, death, rebirth (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 10)**



**Plate 6.2.4 (Left): Planetary bodies' movement - artistic expressions are repositories of Africans' worldview (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 11)**

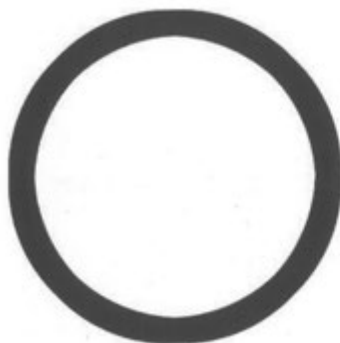


**Fig. 6.2.1 (above): Gravity and Newton's Laws of Motion (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2012: 42)**

The essence of the existence of an African is based on continuity. Continuity is about incrementalism. An isiNdebele saying goes "*ukwanda kwaliwa ngabathakathi*" (only sorcerers wish mankind to dwindle and not multiply and flourish). Human beings see

heavenly bodies. The great, great, great grandparents saw the moon with the naked eye; this represents permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, endlessness, etc. To an African, that idea of permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, endlessness etc. is achieved through sexual reproduction (Nyathi interview, June 2018; also see Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 10).

Pathisa Nyathi's argument is grounded on the fact that art is a true reflection of African material culture. He adds that art expresses African beliefs, customs, values and lifestyles (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 7) Fig. 6.2.2 and Plate 6.2.5). The cyclic nature of life has inspired Africans in numerous ways. The rise of the sun is the beginning of a day and its fall is the end; the process starts over the following day. Seasons are equally cyclic – summer, autumn, winter and spring. Creatures, including humans, sleep, wake, sleep and wake in a cyclic manner. For an African, a people's worldview and cosmology are the result of interaction between nature and culture. Africans observed nature and were inspired by it (*ibid*). This inspiration was reflected as a belief in the interconnectedness of life and afterlife - death. Whatever happens in life should be as after death.



**Fig. 6.2.2: A circle as prime generator of African built forms (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 33)**

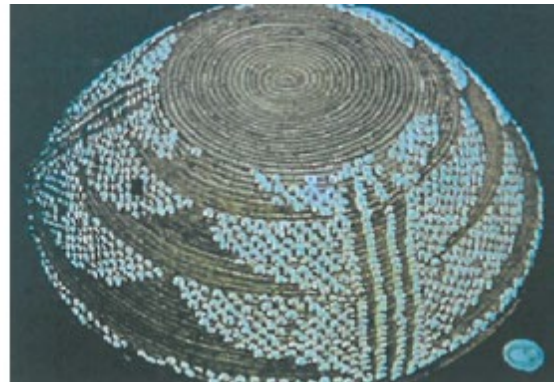


**Plate 6.2.5: Typical Kalanga huts form (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2012: 37)**

Death imitated life through burial ceremonies and vice-versa. The social hierarchy was imitated by spirits after death. This cosmological approach influenced aspects of an African's life but differed from one community to another with respect to application.

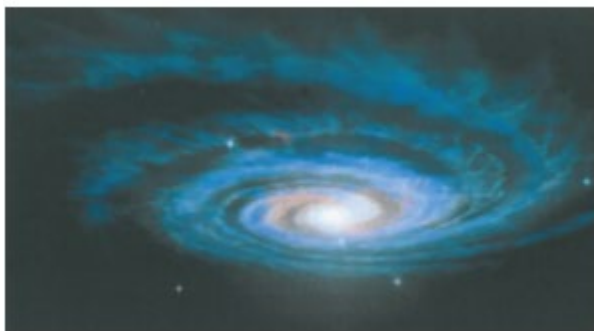


**Fig. 6.2.3: A spiral representing an infinite series of circles (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 34)**

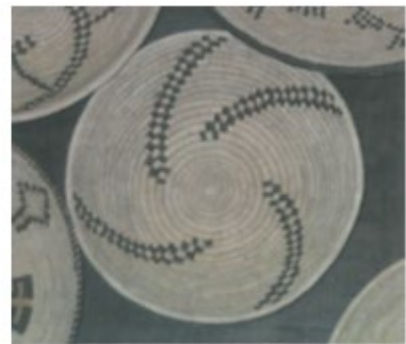


**Plate 6.2.6: A spiral representing an infinite series of circles (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 82)**

The various crafts in Africa's material culture also carried the idea of continuity as inspired by the cosmos. Their design is characterised by circularity. The baskets (Plates 6.2.6 and 6.2.8) are circular as are the clay pots (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 12). Architecture as an African art has followed suit: cattle byres, stone-walled settlements, military formations (the chest-horn formation), Nguni settlements, etc. These forms were informed by Africans belief systems, cosmology, worldview and philosophy.



**Plate 6.2.7: The Milky Way (*umthala*) (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 85)**



**Plate 6.2.8: Whorls (*umoya*) on Ndebele baskets (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 86)**

The circle represents fertility, continuity, and eternity. A circle has neither a beginning nor an end (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013: 32; Amankwah-Ayeh, 1996). Terrestrial bodies are viewed as circular forms (not shapes), including the sun and this has become a source of inspiration for an African.

Since the case study is based in Mthwakazi, there is need to examine current dynamics in this region and the need to restore its value systems. For example, a cone is conceptually considered to be a series of infinite circles with decreasing diameters as one reaches the vertex. This conceptualisation is seen throughout Africa as was discussed earlier in relation to Batamariba architecture (Yavo, 2013).

Architecture and urban design in Mthwakazi is lagging behind other arts disciplines in terms of using these concepts drawn from the Ndebele cosmology. The following section explores other forces behind the amaNdebele restoration agenda.

### **6.2.2 The increasingly loud voice of Mthwakazi restoration**

Zimbabwe is presumably a free country founded on constitutional democracy. Free people do not beg their governments for permission to practise their culture; they inform or notify it if this is deemed necessary (ibid).

Afrocentricity can be drawn from a number of sources, including ethnicity. Ethnicity is a form of identity construction. It is a complex phenomenon and in the Afrocentric context it plays an informative role. Leading anthropologist, John Comaroff (1997) presents five theoretical propositions relevant to understanding issues around ethnic identities in general:

- Ethnicity was never a unitary phenomenon because it describes both a set of relations and mode of consciousness that was ever changing.
- As a form of consciousness, ethnicity was one among many socially constructed phenomena that include totemism, each of which emerged within particular historical structures.
- While totemism emerged with the establishment of symmetrical relations between structurally similar social groupings which may or may not come to be integrated into one political community, ethnicity had its origins in the symmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy.
- While ethnicity is a product of a specific historical process, it tended to take on the 'natural' appearance of an autonomous force and 'principle' capable of determining the course of social life.



- Ethnicity is an objectified 'principle' of collective consciousness of society, could be perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence and could also have a direct and independent impact on the context in which it arose (Comaroff, 1997, 69 – 85).

With a specific focus on the Ndebele, as an ethnic group, Bjorn Lindgren (2004: 5 – 8) sought to take into account what he termed the 'historically' formed specificity of ethnicity and the internal dynamics of ethnicity in Matabeleland. The definition of Ndebele has varied from an inclusive one to one that is externally defined by the current Shona hegemony and is xenophobic (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Ndebele activist group, Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi summarised the forms of oppression emanating from Shona colonisation:

- Marginalisation of the elected MPs of Matabeleland
  - Instituting a reign of terror in Matabeleland
  - Translocation of the economic resources of Matabeleland to Mashonaland
  - Reserving key jobs for Shona people in Matabeleland
  - Depriving the people of Matabeleland of educational opportunities
  - Retarding the cultural identity of the inter-cultural society of Matabeleland.
- (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 47)

This list also summarises the basic reasons for Ndebele resentment of the post-colonial nation that is perceived as only serving Shona interests. The Gukurahundi atrocities (see Appendix) in Matabeleland and Midlands instilled fear but also galvanised Ndebele particularism.

The following letter written by the former Governor of Matabeleland North, Welshman Mabheha, supports Umhlahlo we Sizwe sika Mthwakazi's assertions:

Your excellence you may be surprised to hear that I usually get lost when I come across people who mix up my country Matabeleland with Zimbabwe, because Zimbabwe is a former British Colony which was colonised in 1890 and granted independence on 18 April 1980. While my homeland Matabeleland is a territory which was an independent Kingdom



until it was invaded by the British South African Company (BSACo) on 4 November 1893, in defiance of the authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Actually in terms of the Moffatt Treaty of Peace and Unity of 11 February 1888 between Queen Victoria and King Lobengula, Britain and Matabeleland were allies, and due to our respect to our King we have not renounced his vow.

(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 28 – 29)

This mood is pervasive amongst Mthwakazi citizens and is exacerbated by the institutionalised illegalisation of ethnicity by the ZANU-PF government.

In Zimbabwe's public spaces, ethnicity is commonly criminalised and labelled as a *sine-qua-non* of tribalism (Mhlanga, 2012: 209). Brilliant Mhlanga (2012: 206) defines what he calls the, "northern problem" as a metaphoric reference to the existence of a disgruntled group claiming a particular history that is different from that of the dominant 'ethnic' in a state. The 'northern' does not necessarily refer to the geographic location of those forms of disillusionment with a nation state but indicates the presence of an attendant problem that calls for revision of the governance system, or secession or restoration. The northern problem is a crystallisation of feelings around social, economic and political marginalisation. This problem is tied to ethnicity, race, region, etc. and thus leads to skewed distribution of national resources.

This is not a peculiarly Zimbabwean problem but an African challenge. Ken Wiwa, (2000: 34) sums it up in the case of Nigeria by suggesting that ethnicity matters more than qualifications when it comes to distributing the best jobs and scholarships.

AmaNdebele particularism does not fit easily into the imagined nation and the state where amaNdebele experiences, histories and heroes are subordinated to triumphant and hegemonic Shona history, if not completely ignored. ZANU-PF's abuse of the post-colonial state to violently destroy Ndebele particularism triggered the current Matabeleland politics of alienation, resentment and grievance that have combined to fuel the desire for a restoration of the precolonial amaNdebele State (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008: 51). The restoration agenda is driven by various groups inside and outside Zimbabwe. Calls for a separate state are supported by organisations such as the Mthwakazi People's Convention (MPC), Umhlahlo weSizwe sikaMzilikazi and Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF) as well as different online social networks such as

iNkundla.net and the Forum. These present an entrenched precolonial fault line (Mhlanga, 2012: 210). Less radical calls from Imbokodo, Imbovane Yamahlabezulu and ibhetshu likaZulu demand federalism; however the Zimbabwean government is having none of that.

The northern problem scenario is evident across sub-Saharan Africa. Brilliant Mhlanga (2012: 211) offers the following examples:

- Katanga in DRC. Lumumbists perceived it as a direct indictment of the unitary state following Moise Tshombe's call for equitable distribution of resources.
- The 1967 Biafra war in Nigeria
- The 1999 Caprivi crisis in Namibia
- Eritrea's secession in 1993
- The Kalanga and Basarwa of Botswana's call for cultural recognition
- The Lozi of Zambia calling for a Barotse Kingdom
- Southern Cameroon where the English-speaking South is demanding independence
- South Sudan, which culminated in a separate state
- The Ngoni of Malawi
- The Pemba of Zanzibar
- The Zulu people have continued to manifest characteristics of a 'nation within a nation'.

This suggests that the status quo on the continent is not sustainable. These forms of internal colonialism are also reflected in the built environment. Failure to respond to these social dynamics impedes the continent's development. It is thus submitted that the Zimbabwean northern problem requires an appropriate Afrocentric response with respect to the built environment. While there have been some tentative developments in this regard in Matabeleland, counter-efforts persist.

Calls for independence for the amaNdebele State of Mthwakazi Kingdom are growing as indicated by the attempted coronation of various claimants to the throne, including His Imperial Majesty King Mzilikazi II on 9 September 2017. The issue of the Ndebele Kingdom has raged on from the moment King Lobengula was said to have

disappeared after the First Anglo-Ndebele War of 1893 and attempts at restoration took place before the Second Anglo-Ndebele War of 1896 and were thwarted by the British colonisers.



**Plate 6.2.9: HIM Mzilikazi II is confronted by heavy armoured Zimbabwe Republic Police vehicles preventing the celebration of his coronation on 12 September 2017 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group)**

Debate on the rightful heir to the throne has stimulated a vortex of ideas among ordinary Mthwakazi citizens, cultural enthusiasts, academics, politicians and cultural organisations. The public celebration and coronation was blocked by the state security apparatus on 12 September 2017 and 3 March 2018 (See Plates 6.2.9 – 6.2.11).



**Plate 6.2.10: The King's followers are dispersed by the Zimbabwe Riot Police on 12 September 2017 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group)**



**Plate 6.2.11: HIM King Mzilikazi II and the Queen during one of their public excursions in September 2017. (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group)**



**Plate 6.2.12: Crown Prince Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo at the iNduna uNyangazonke Ndiweni's Residence after the failed coronation of 3 March 2018 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group)**



**Plate 6.2.13: Crown Prince Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo at the iNduna uNyangazonke Ndiweni's Residence after the failed coronation of 3 March 2018 (1893 Mthwakazi Restoration Movement WhatsApp Group)**

Matabeleland's Professor Misheck Jongintaba Matshazi (who spent many years at Fort Hare University in the Eastern Cape, South Africa) was very close to Prince Mncedisi Lobengula Khumalo's household. Prince Mncedisi's son, Bulelani Lobengula Khumalo (Plates 6.2.12 and 6.2.13), who currently resides in Pretoria and has been a



regular attendee at cultural events affecting his people, particularly the annual King Mzilikazi Commemorations, now argues that he is the rightful heir apparent to the Ndebele throne.

Key experts on Ndebele history, including Professor Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu, Professor Misheck Jongintaba Matshazi, Mqondobanzi Magonya and a plethora of Ndebele cultural groups seem to have reached consensus on this issue (Mncumbatha, bulawayo24 News, 2012, 19 June at 14:18hrs SAST). However, it remains unresolved and the Government of Zimbabwe has jumped into the fray and has attempted to legally block these processes or at least curtail a full-blown restoration agenda.

George Mkhwanazi (bulawayo24 News, 2018, 5 March at 14:05hrs SAST) argues that apart from being a symbol of national unity and source of pride, Mthwakazi needs the institution of the king to:

- a. Reverse the cultural and linguistic erosion suffered by the multi-tribal Mthwakazi nation.
- b. Lead people on a crusade to conserve culture and language against all threats.
- c. Revive some of the ancient but relevant cultural heritage and ceremonies such as *inxwala*, *umhlanga* (*sic*, Reed Dance Ceremony), *umthontiso* and *ukusoka* (*sic*, circumcision rites).
- d. Spearhead efforts to recover lost land and the 800 000 herd of cattle looted after the fall of the amaNdebele Kingdom.
- e. Spearhead development in the region through proper land administration, the *ukusisa* (cattle loaning) system and *isiphala seNkosi* (the King's silos).
- f. Make final adjudication on all cases referred by the chiefs.

The revival of the Kingdom has an obvious impact on civic spaces in the region and it is time architects and built environment professionals begin to take into cognisance

this very important social and political element that lays the foundation for Afrocentric ideology of the Mthwakazi Nation.

As above so is below is a calling for amaNdebele culture and most African communities. Human beings reflect in themselves what the environment gives and vice-versa. In the words of the former President of South Africa: “I owe my being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land .....” (Sone, 7 March 2016: 5). An amaNdebele psyche is geographically influenced by uNgulukudela (Limpopo River), UGwembe (Zambezi River) and the Shangane River and the Great Matopo Hills (Informant Y – Appendix II). Shangane River is spoken of with great affection as it is the scene of the King’s last sitting during the Gadade Battle (Informant X – Appendix II). These geographical boundaries are linked to the skies above and the universe at large. Together with the great King Mzilikazi’s epic journey from KwaZulu, they define the amaNdebele cosmology and, as discussed in the following section, provide the basis for amaNdebele built forms.

### 6.3 THE MAKINGS OF ISINDEBELE BUILT FORMS

This section discusses typical responses from various informants when asked to express their understanding of a typical isiNdebele homestead. In some instances, this is compared with what they actually built in the case of those who are based in rural areas. The question focused on civic spaces within the homestead or settlement. The respondents were drawn from four provinces that constitute the pre-colonisation boundaries of Mthwakazi Kingdom. These are the three Matabeleland provinces and parts of the Midlands. The fieldwork encompassed observation as well as the informants’ perceptions of an isiNdebele homestead and the reasons for the compound patterns. The researcher sought to establish and confirm the underlying principles and their Afrocentricity (Afrocentric sources). Figures 6.3.1 – 6.3.3 portray what exists on the ground and figures 6.3.4 and 6.3.5 are narratives of what informants understood as a traditional isiNdebele compound. An ideal isiNdebele traditional compound is then drawn by inference from this data.



### 6.3.1 Basic tenets of isiNdebele built forms

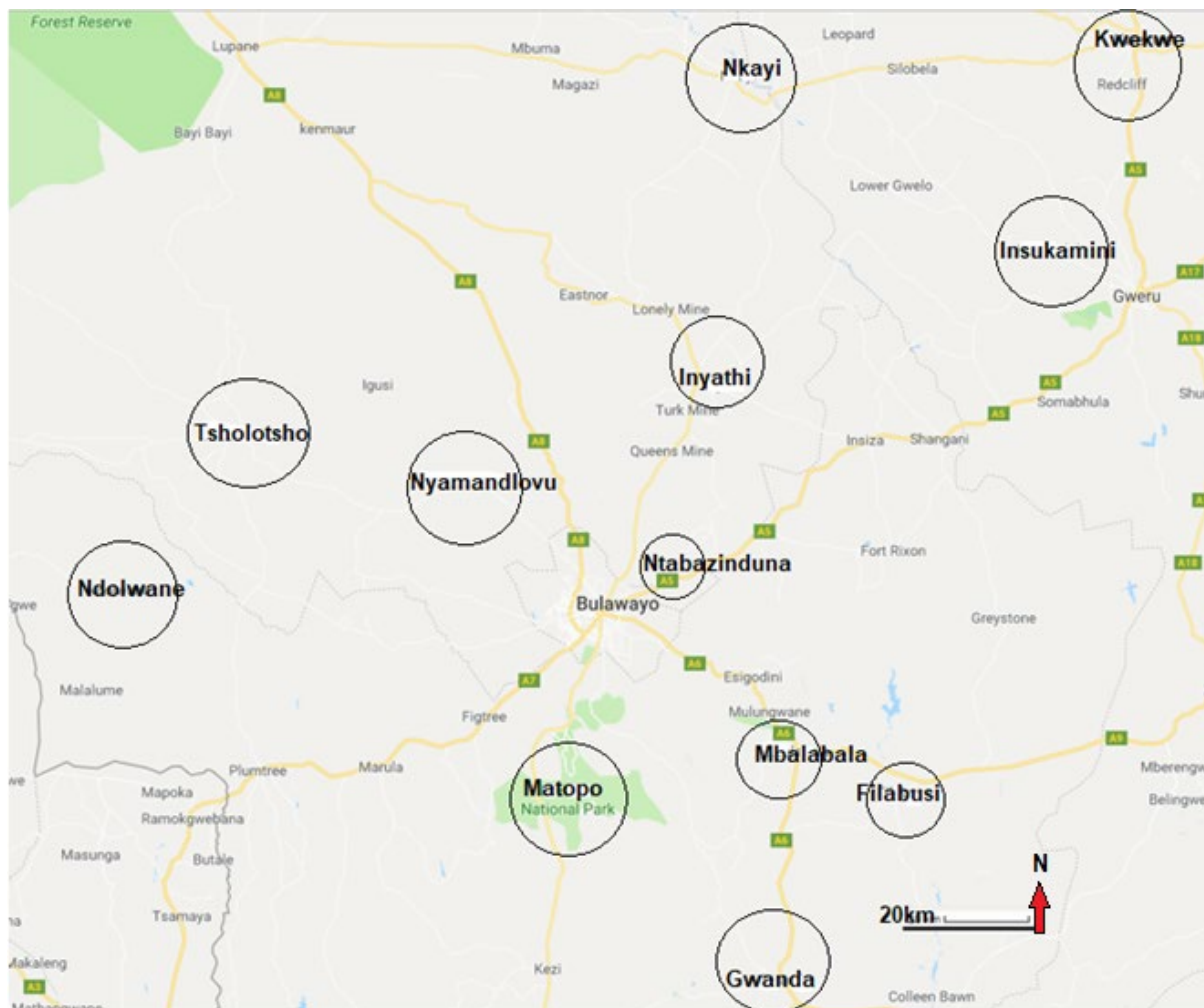
Understanding of what constitutes an isiNdebele homestead or settlement mainly related to the physical layout. The factors that influenced such layout were part of the discussion. These varied from cultural, to social structure and geographic and climatic factors as well as cosmological orientation. In the case of cosmological orientation, Mr Nyathi argued that the circle was the basis of all art in isiNdebele culture and he supported his thought process through his writings (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2013 and 2016). This was discussed in Section 6.2 above and this section focuses on other respondents so as to triangulate his facts.



Indeed the makings of isiNdebele built forms require soul-searching (Plate 6.3.1) to develop appropriate Afrocentric placemaking and architecture for the future. Thus, the section looks at what constitutes Ndebele built forms.

**Plate 6.3.1: The thinking man: A statue displayed at the Municipal Civic Precinct grounds (Author**

There are two approaches to understanding what constitutes an isiNdebele homestead, namely, the as built and the historical/cultural narrative. In the latter case, most vary between organic and rectilinearity. Both situations are discussed in the context of the academic discussion in section 6.2.



**Fig. 6.3.1: Fieldwork - Areas in Matabeleland and parts of Midlands that were visited by the author (Author, Google)**

The Tsholotsho example is typical of homesteads that were encountered during fieldwork. The perimeter fence is rectilinear with the individual forms within being predominantly circular (Fig. 6.3.2). The relative location of Tsholotsho and other rural areas visited by the author during fieldwork are illustrated in Fig. 6.3.1.





Fig. 6.3.2: Sample One of a homestead in rural Matabeleland shoeing homestead plan and views taken from points A, B, C, D and E (Author and Viloshin Govender)

Most entrances are to the west of the homestead (Plate 6.3.2 and Fig. 6.3.2). Entrances to housing units (huts) are influenced by bitterly cold winter and easterly prevailing winds. Consequently, most entrances are west orientated. The entrance to the homestead can be changed by site location relative to the main road (Fig. 6.3.2 – 6.3.4).

Another key space is what one would call a civic space in the sense of being a point of arrival for visitors that can also be used as a relaxation space, called *inkundla/idale* by most informants. It is usually either inside the home fence or just outside on the western side before the main entrance. In this particular homestead, it is just inside the homestead on the left hand side (Fig. 6.3.2 and Plate 6.3.4). The other civic space within the homestead is the open fire place and covered cooking space (Fig. 6.3.2 and Plate 6.3.9). These are mainly used by women and are usually located behind the sleeping rooms but in front of the granaries. Traditionally, an isiNdebele building is open plan and accommodates a single function such as sleeping, cooking, etc.



**Plate 6.3.2: (A) View towards the homestead entrance – On the left inside the homestead is the place of arrival (Author)**





**Plate 6.3.3: View of the place of arrival – *inkundla/idale* (Sanele Mkhwanazi)**

Response to climatic factors is dealt with the creating a shaded area of arrival for visitors (*Idale*) located just inside the homestead. The plants assist with cooling the



area. Unlike in most traditional places of arrival this one is inside the compound. Nonetheless, the function is the same.

**Plate 6.3.4: Decorated verandah window (author)**

Decorative elements were also observed around windows. Decoration is done both inside and outside the huts to capture an Afrocentric identity (Plates



**Plate 6.3.5: A kitchen/umkulu is usually the most decorated with a feminine civic space in front of it. In some instances the space is bounded by a short wall (Author)**



**Plate 6.3.6: *Umsamo* is the interior rear space of a kitchen where kitchen utensils are stored (Author)**





Kitchens are the most decorated especially around the space at the back where kitchen utensils are stored (Umsamo) (Plate 6.3.6). Some of the utensils stored in the kitchen are shown in Plate 6.3.7.

**Plate 6.3.7: Display of an array of utensil and artefacts (Sanele)**



**Plate 6.3.8: Decorated exterior of houses around the homestead (Author)**

The exteriors are also lavishly decorated using local clay.



**Plate 6.3.9: The kitchen (A), covered cooking area (B) and open cooking area (C) (Author)**



**Plate 6.3.10: Of interest here is the rocky terrain of the Matopo hills (Sanele)**

The construction techniques used in building huts were mainly load bearing walls (Plate 6.3.8) and perimeter timber load bearing columns (Plate 6.3.9). The availability



of timber in the Matabeleland North Province is the basis for the timber peristyle timber construction technique - a good example of cultural / ecological impact on built form. This was an interesting setting reflecting the hilly Matopo area and the vegetation (Plate 5.3.8). The Matopo hills are steeped in the amaNdebele psyche. It is the home to the holly Njelele shrine seen in the distant background (Plate 6.3.10). This terrain should be at the centre of amaNdebele Afrocentric placemaking and architectural development. The Njelele Shrine is the home of the mystical gods of the rains.



**Plate 6.3.11: A homestead tucked between boulders of the Matopo with the Njelele in the background (Author)**

The roof forms merge with the boulders creating a unique existential setting (Plate 6.3.11). Water provides a normal feature around which traditional settlements were built for sustenance.

Other key elements in most homesteads include the location of the *isibaya* that houses domesticated animals such as goats, sheep, cattle, etc. In the main, these are located at a secure distance in the windward direction to avoid foul smells and flies. In this particular example of informant N, these are on the northern side of the homestead and thus allow winds to blow the foul smell westwards (Fig. 6.3.2 and Plate 6.3.12).

This process is carried out by men only in the kraal. Rituals are performed on a chosen ox, with libation, a spear and snuff being part of the process (Plate 6.3.13). It aims to appease the ancestors and request good health and living for the family as well as banish bad spirits. The female domain is usually at the back of the homestead and mainly consists of the granaries.



**Plate 6.3.12: *Isibaya* with its palisaded perimeter – usually located in the male outdoor domain (Author)**

The space in front of the kitchen is the civic space for women (Plate 6.3.9), just as *idale* is the civic space for men. These photos (Plate 6.3.9) were taken by the author in Matopo area where one of the informants is driving the restoration of Ndebele homestead planning. The back of the cooking space (kitchen – *umkulu*) is known as *umsamo* and is another “civic” space where the family gather to appease their ancestors. Rituals that are carried out in the kraal/*isibaya* are considered to be of a deeper level and mostly address clan issues unlike those carried out at *emsamo* that can be carried out more regularly.

One of the homesteads visited by the researcher in Tsholotsho that was built by a young family shows the transformation of circular to rectilinear forms (Fig. 6.3.3 and Plates 6.3.14 and 6.3.15). This family employed a rectilinear palisaded boundary – a strong feature in early amaNdebele settlements.



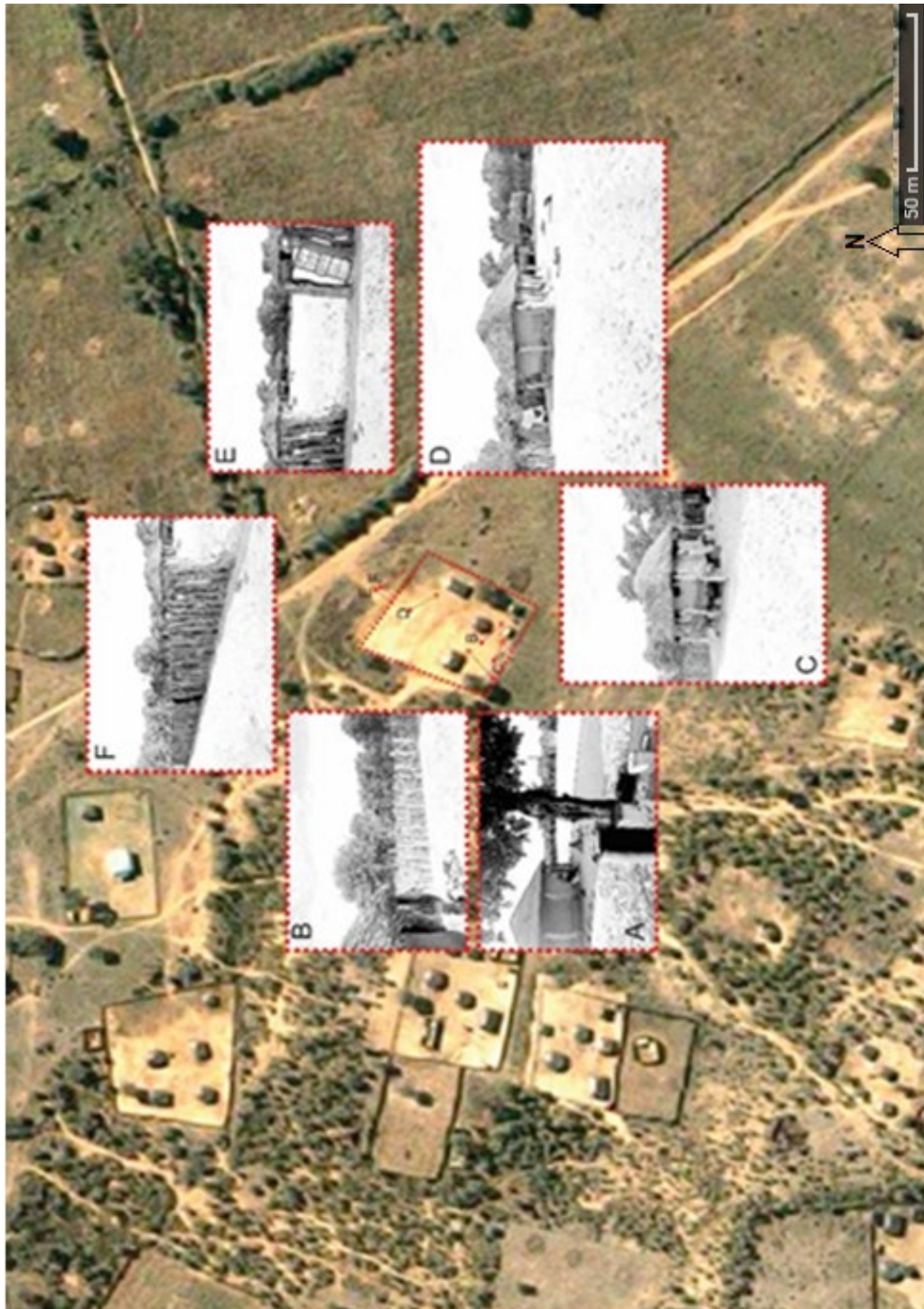
Plate 6.3.13: An ancestral beast (*Inkomo yamadlozi*) (Google, accessed 23/7/2017)

In some instances civic spaces around natural features such as vegetation become the driver of homestead planning (Fig. 6.3.4 and Plate 6.3.17). In this homestead, a huge tree provided shelter from the elements and thus became a natural setting for *inkundla/idale*. Traditionally, *inkundla* or *idale* was the male civic domain. The *inkundla* mainly refers to a civic space found either by the King's residence or by the Chief's residence or any person who deals with the general public to perform civic duties. *Idale* refers to ordinary citizens' civic spaces within homesteads. In the case of ordinary members of the community, *idale* is the nerve centre for male activities such as carving of homestead craft such as yokes (*amajogwe*), axes and hoe handles (*im'phini*). It is where the males gather to feast on bovine heads (*inhloko*) and cook male only food and beverages such as milk porridge (*isathiyane*), etc.

Data were also gathered on informants' understanding of the traditional layout of an isiNdebele homestead (Fig. 6.3.5 - Fig. 6.3.9). The figures show typical examples of organic and rectilinear perimeter fence forms. The strong circularity of forms as single



units and as overall homestead boundary morphology is drawn from the cosmological orientation of isiNdebele culture that has its roots in the expression of permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, endlessness, etc.



**Fig. 6.3.3: Sample Two of a homestead in rural Matabeleland) – Tsholotsho showing homestead plan and views A, B, C, D, E and F (Author and Viloshin Govender)**

This cosmological expressionism should be explored as a design generator of contemporary built environments. As can be observed in Fig. 6.3.2 – Fig. 6.3.4, the concept of circularity is eroding fast in rural areas.





**Plate 6.3.14: View into the public entrance of a palisaded homestead in rural Matabeleland (Author)**



**Plate 6.3.15: A rectilinearr hut showing an independent wall structure (Author)**

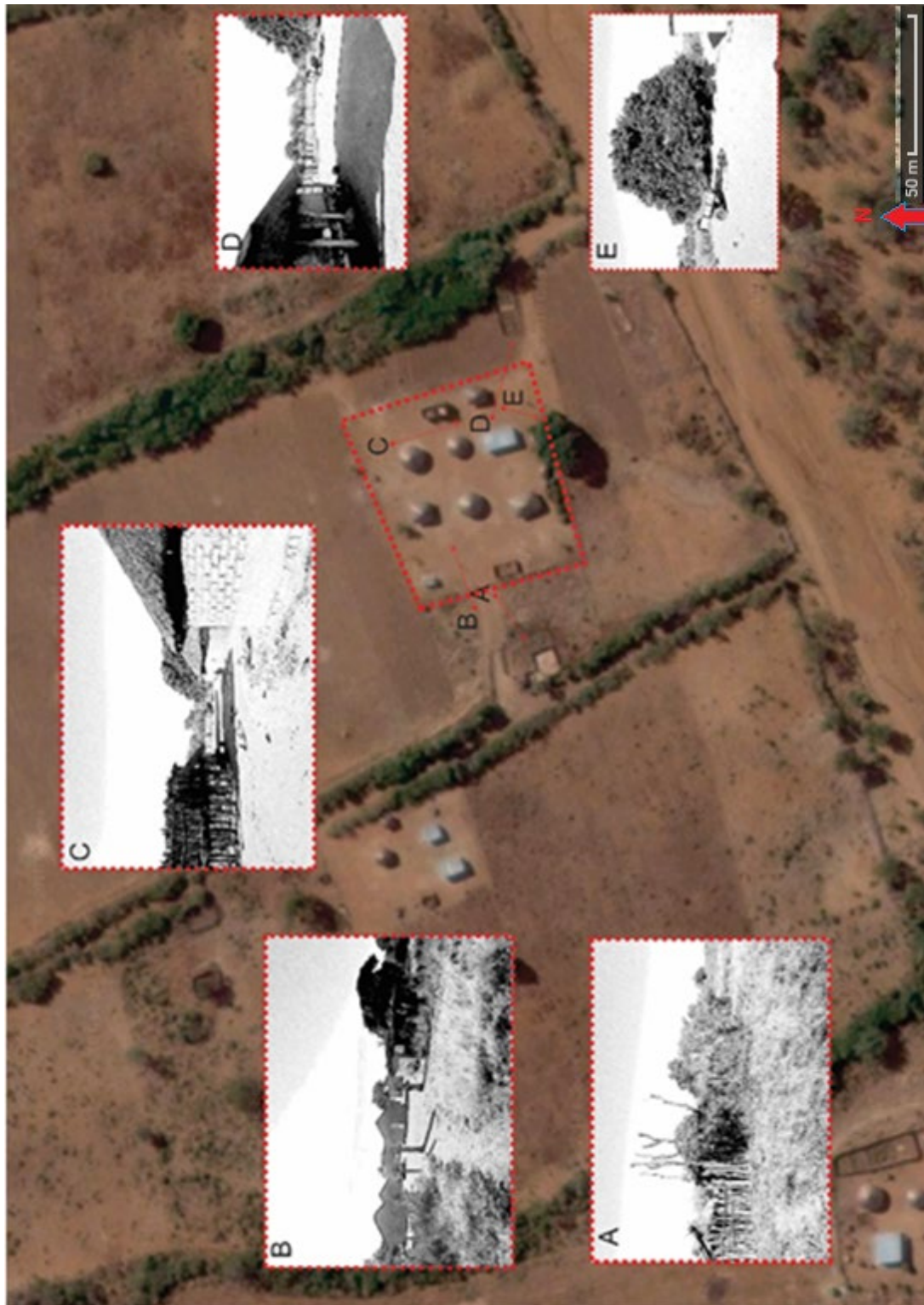


Fig. 6.3. 4: Sample Three of a homestead in rural Matabeleland – Inyathi showing homestead palm, and views A, B, C, D and E (Author and Viloshin Govender)

Rectilinearity has found its way into isiNdebele built forms especially in homestead delineation which is mainly influenced by the bylaws and property rights introduced by coloniality. This erosion is glaringly demonstrated by comparing Fig. 6.3.2 with Fig. 6.3.8 and 6.3.9.



**Plate 6.3.16: View to the entrance that was influenced by the access road (Author)**



**Plate 6.3.17: View from the “back” of the homestead to *inkundla/idale* (Author)**

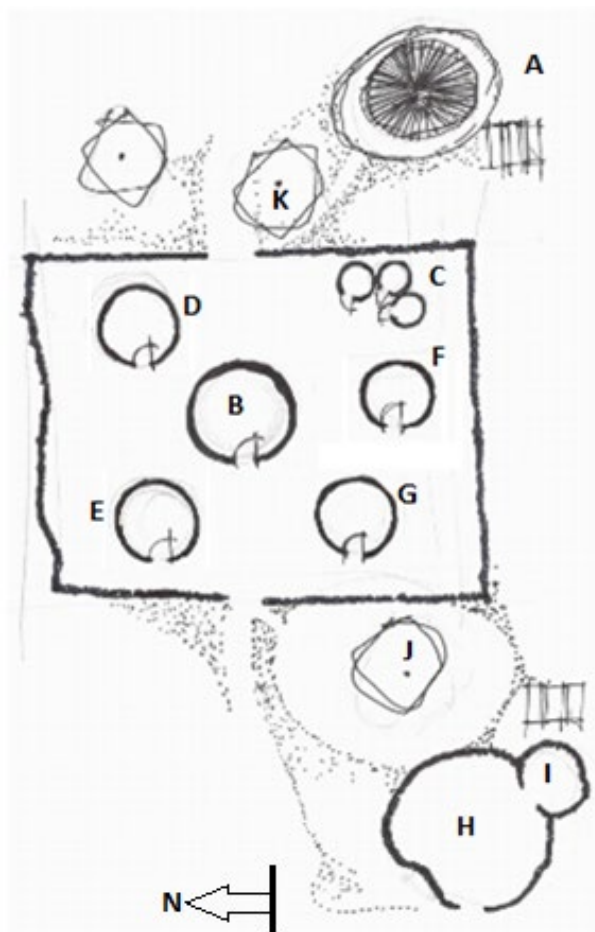


Fig. 6.3.5: Sample Four – Appendix II showing the general compound layout with a rectilinear perimeter fence (Top) (Author and Thando Nyathi)

- A – *Isiza* for storing unprocessed crops especially sorghum
- B – Parents' sleeping space
- C – *Iziphala* – granary for processed grains
- D - *ixhiba lamajaha/labafana* - Sleeping space for boys
- E – (*ixhiba lamantombazana* – Girls' sleeping space
- F – *Umkhulu* – Cooking space. G – Visitors' sleeping space
- H – *Isibaya* – kraal for cattle
- I – *Isibaya* - Goats/sheep kraal
- J - *Idale/Inkundla* (civic space)
- K – Women's outdoor space

Fig. 6.3.6: Sample Four – Appendix II showing the general compound layout with a rectilinear perimeter fence (Left) (Author and Thando Nyathi)

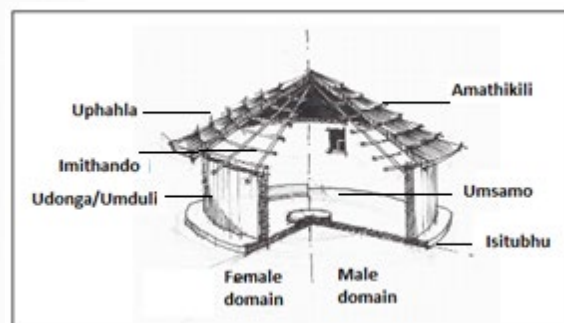


Fig. 6.3.7: Sample Four – Appendix II, an isiNdebele dwelling (Top) (Author and Thando Nyathi)



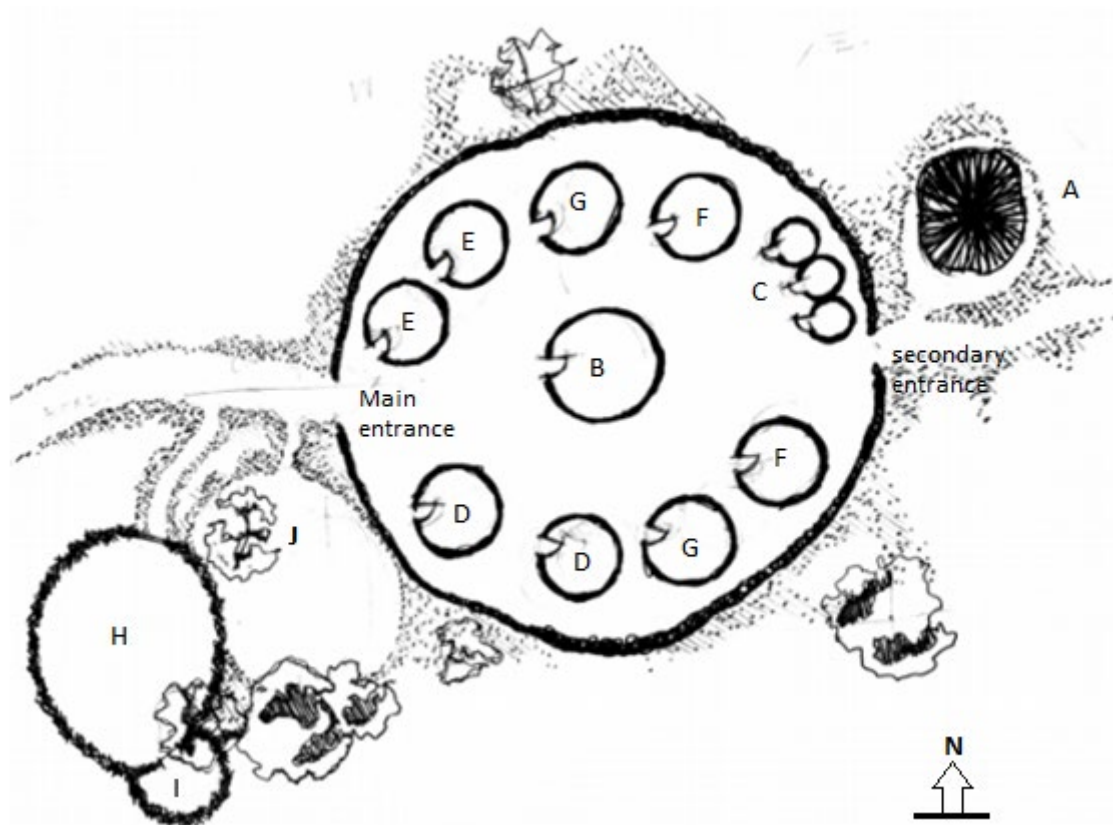


Fig. 6.3.8: Sample 5– Appendix II showing the general compound layout with organic perimeter fence. The key is the same as in Fig. 6.3.6. (Author and Thando Nyathi)



Fig. 6.3.9: Sample 5 – Appendix II showing the general compound layout with an organic perimeter fence (Author and Thando Nyathi)

The general internal layout of building units varies but has an overall theme. A summary of the informants' descriptions of the traditional layout of an isiNdebele homestead is graphically illustrated in Fig. 6.3.10. There were internal and external gender-based domains in the overall layout. With respect to outdoor spaces, female domains were generally at the back (east) as one enters the homestead. This is the area where one would find girls and other female family members' sleeping rooms.

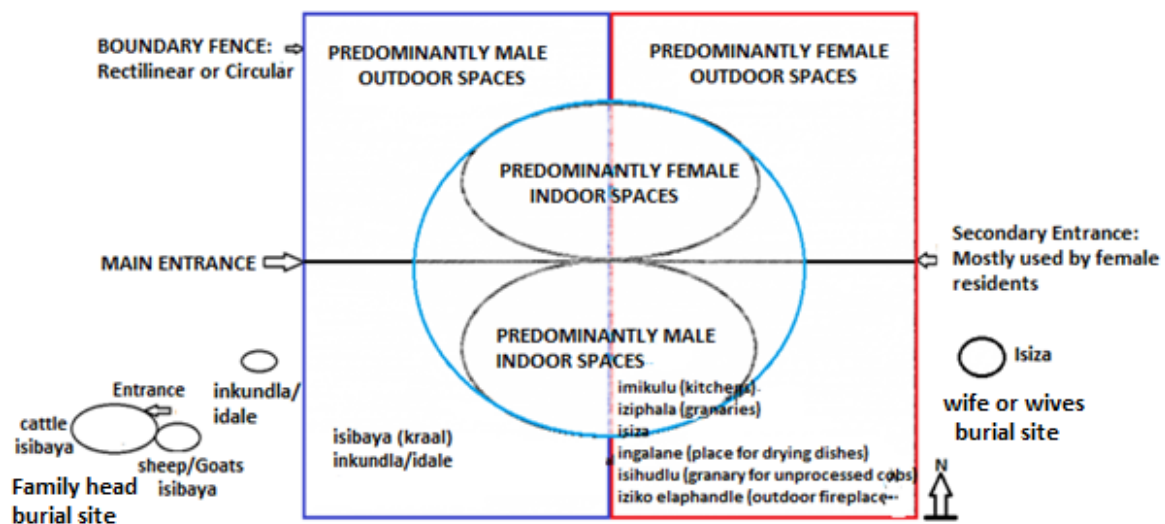


Fig. 6.3.10: General conceptual domains of an isiNdebele homestead (Author)

Male domains were mainly located in front as one enters the compound from the west. This is where boys and male family members' sleeping spaces were located. The kitchen would be located behind the sleeping spaces and was visible as one entered the compound. In a polygamous relationship the pattern would be repeated with the sleeping spaces in the same row, arranged from right to left in seniority (Fig. Appendix II). Internally, especially with respect to the kitchen, the female domain was on the left (the northern side of the room) for surveillance whilst that of males was on the right (the southern side) behind the door for protection (Fig. 6.3.7 and Fig. 6.3.10).

### 6.3.2 The Distant Voices of Afrocentric Mthwakazi built forms

Cultural subjugation is clear in two major projects carried out after Zimbabwe's independence: the Harare International Airport (Plate 6.3.18 and 6.3.19) and Bulawayo's Dr J M Nkomo International Airport (Plate 6.3.20 and 6.3.21). The former's conceptual grounding is the Great Zimbabwe Ruins which most Zezuru people identify



with, whereas Bulawayo's design is a composition of meaningless rectilinear forms. In terms of the coloniality of the modern city of Bulawayo, the grid was diametrically opposed to the organic nature of most of the Mthwakazi Nation's traditional settlements as typified by Old Bulawayo, King Lobengula's last seat of power.



**Plate 6.3.18:** Harare International Airport with its Observation Tower mimicking Great Zimbabwe's Conical Tower, thus recalling the glory of pre-colonial Shona history (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 13:30)



**Plate 6.3.19:** Harare International Airport with its Observation Tower showing the decorative elements found at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 14:00)



**Plate 6.3.20:** The Bulawayo's Dr Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Airport entrance showing form and materiality unresponsive to local Mthwakazi cultures (Google, accessed 29/09/2017 14:00)



**Plate 6.3.21:** Bulawayo's Dr Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Airport's Observation Tower is a simple functional element with further emphasis on rectilinearity

Regardless of the inspiration drawn from Great Zimbabwe, Shona built forms could draw from a rich sculptural and carving history. The inspiration should apply to both architecture and landscape. What is of essence is the relevance to the context and functionality which has been lost by replication of misinterpreted Great Zimbabwe's Conical Tower. A community Centre, for example, would draw inspiration from the stories behind "The Family" Shona carvings (Plate 6.3.22 – B) that bring about a sense of community. This would be more so in the design of civic spaces as they are meant to bring about a sense of civility. The mythical Nyaminyami snake (Plate 6.3.22 – A

and D) found around the Zambezi River is another source of potential Afrocentric placemaking and architectural inspiration.

**A - Nyaminyami snake**



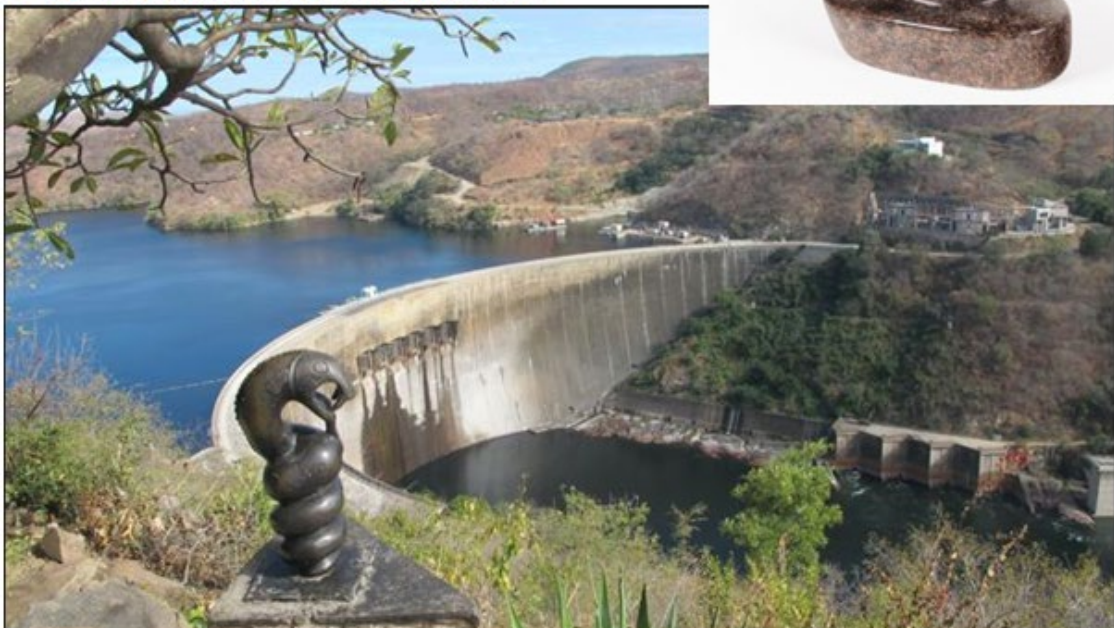
**B - Community**



**C - Mother and child**



**D - Nyaminyami snake as landscape feature**



**Plate 6.3.22 A, B, C, D: Potential sources of Afrocentric placemaking and architectural inspiration (Google, accessed 27/11/2018)**

The Nyaminyami is one of the revered Tonga gods that protects and give sustenance to communities especially in times of strife. It is also called the River God as it is believed to reside in the Zambezi River. Although not a part of this study, the Tonga and Ndebele have historically close ties. Other cultural artefacts that are found in Shona culture include furniture such as headrests (Plate 6.3.23). Again, the form of these cultural artefacts can be of importance in the development of an Afrocentric built



environment as could be incorporated into the landscape or even inspire placemaking and architecture.



**Plate 6.3.23: The Shona headrest (Africa Direct, 2017, Google, accessed 27/11/2018)**

As noted previously, the amaNdebele worldview is about circularity rather than linearity. Non-involvement of amaNdebele architects and other professionals in the built environment in Mthwakazi is the key reason for the development of skewed and biased built forms. Even amongst Africans, circularity is perceived and developed differently. It is in the interests of democracy to allow room for local communities to imprint their signatures on the local environment just as any other artist would do.



**Plate 6.3.24: The Mhlahlandlela Government Complex designed by Vengesayi Architects – view to the vehicular entrance (Source: Google. Accessed 18/9/2016)**



**Plate 6.3.25: The Mhlahlandlela Government Complex located in the vicinity of the High Court Building and a major transport node, both to the general north of this site (Source: Google. Accessed 18/9/2016)**



Since Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, only one public building of note has been built, the uMhlahlandlela Government Complex (Plates 6.3.25 and 6.3.26) and no public civic space of note. Like the airport, this building form and its siting did not address issues of local identity or the aspirations of the peoples of the region. Its predominant linearity was at variance with amaNdebele cosmological orientation.



**Fig. 6.3.11- National University of Science & Techonolgy (NUST) Master Plan (Google: Mwamuka and Mercuri Design Report – accessed on 14 March 2018)**

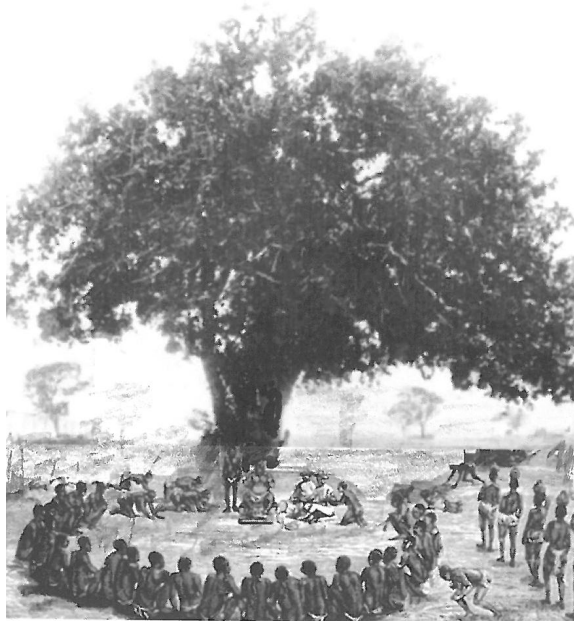
The other public project that dealt with issues around culture and identity, the Bulawayo Executive Mayoral Residence, was never built (Mthethwa, 2001, 2002, 2011). Thus, Bulawayo as a city can be identified only with its colonial past with buildings such as the City Hall and the High Court amongst a host of similar civic buildings being the case in point. This view is generally held by locals and has been highlighted by local politicians such as Dr. Dumiso Dabengwa (*The Chronicle*, 29 June, 2011: 1) and Professor Welshman Ncube (*The Chronicle*, 4 July, 2011: 1).

Recent years have seen the very distant voice of Mthwakazi being listened to by architects and other professionals in the built environment. None has been more receptive than Mwamuka, Mercuri Associates and Architects. Their work in the Mthwakazi region is exemplified by their Master Plan for the National University of Science & Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo along Gwanda Road off Cecil Avenue (Fig. 6.3.3). This master plan initiated a debate on issues around circularity and demonstrated the will to bring out the beauty of African art in the built environment. Its approach to circularity was emphasised by its radial lines that reflect the sun's centrality in the universe.

The Master plan is composed of dual concentric circles like two ripples in a water body. The southern concentric circle is the core of University Administration, the Great Hall, Library and the Students' Union buildings with academics' residential units to the east to northeast of it. Various Faculties are in the northern area on the same loci. The northern concentric circle is mostly reserved for non-academic (support) staff, student residences and sport fields.

The NUST was to be the second public university and the first in Mthwakazi region and it therefore took on a nationalistic agenda with a regionalist character. The architects used the morphology of Old Bulawayo (King Lobengula's seat of power) to generate form in their Master plan design. The Master plan not only reflected the planning principles of KoBulawayo but historical amaNdebele settlements from eGabeni in modern-day South Africa and by extension amaZulu historical settlements.





**Fig. 6.3.12: The King addressing his Chiefs with the tree providing a landmark as a meeting place (Adapted by author)**

The Administration Building was the mainstay of the design with the Vice-Chancellor's Office (Plate 6.8.26) placed in such a way that he/she is symbolically the King/Queen of the settlement thus affording him/her views through to the second concentric circle and beyond.

This symbolically represents an amaNdebele King sitting in front of a huge tree addressing his chiefs and surrounded by his warriors. The concentric circles also took this form with the middle component of the Administration Block (Plate 6.3.23 and 6.3.25) symbolising the tree. Unfortunately, the three-dimensional design was very post-modern, typified by the Faculty of Commerce Building with an eclectic and playful combination of pure forms derivatives (Plate 6.3.27).



**Plate 6.3.26: View into the Great Hall and the East Wing of the Administration Block with the Vice-Chancellor's Office on the top left hand side with a protruding circular form (Google Maps, 14/03/2018: 09:58 CAT)**





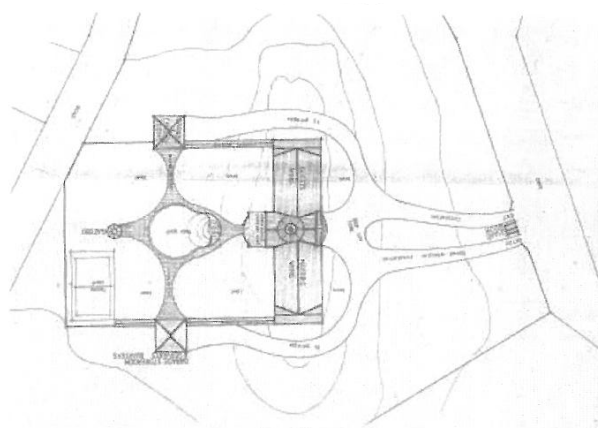
**Plate 6.3.27: The Faculty of Commerce Building (Google Maps, 15/03/2018: 15:58 CAT)**



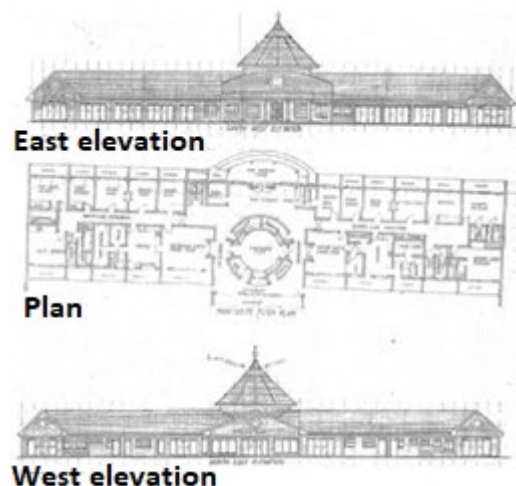
**Plate 6.3.28: The protruding glass pyramid on a staircase was the language used throughout to emphasise seeing and being seen (Google Maps, 15/03/2018: 1542 CAT, Tatenda Mpofu – Photo taken July 2017)**

The second precedent is the proposed Bulawayo Mayoral Residence. This project was specifically designed to respond to Mthwakazi local cultural and identity issues. It was designed by the Bulawayo City Council Architectural Section headed by Mr Peter Daniso Sibanda in collaboration with John Knight's Studio 10 Architects. The researcher was also involved from the conceptual stage through to working drawings. Both these precedent studies drew their conceptual grounding from Mthwakazi history and culture and hence identity and are discussed below.

No project raised more vibrant debate on local issues than the Bulawayo Executive Mayoral Residence. Councillors had wanted a design that responds to Old Bulawayo (King Lobengula's capital); this can be interpreted as a call for localness with respect to culture, history and identity which is what the design team did. The first response was produced internally by the Architectural Section that identified design philosophies that were concretised when it was decided that they should work with a local Practice, Studio 10. The initial design interpreted this challenge through a classical architectural response (Fig. 6.3.13 and Fig. 6.3.14) which fell short of Councillors' expectations.



**Fig. 6.3.13: The second proposed scheme of the Mayor's Residence: site Plan (Mthethwa, 2011: 170)**



**Fig. 6.3.14: The plan and elevations of the proposed scheme (Mthethwa, 2011: 170)**

The Council's call for localness is appropriate given the building's semi-public nature in that semi-public spaces such as an outdoor space for men's multi-domestic purposes (*idale*), are part of isiNdebele culture (Mthethwa, 2011: 160). The schedule of accommodation was as follows (Mthethwa, 2011: 161 – 162):





**Plate 6.3.29: The Site plan of the Proposed Bulawayo Mayoral Residence project (Google Maps, Accessed 20/3/2018)**

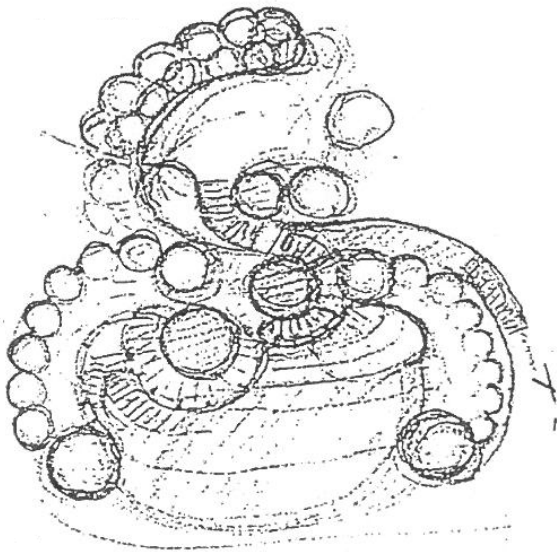


**Plate 6.3.30: View to the West – The CBD (Mthethwa, 2011: 168)**



**Plate 6.3.31: View to the North from the site: NUST (Mthethwa, 2011: 168)**

The site is located opposite the NUST along Gwanda Road (Plate 6.3.29 and Plate 6.3.31). It is on a hill outcrop that was considered to be in the mould of traditional amaNdebele settlements and therefore symbolically appropriate. The site overlooks the city centre located to the west (Plate 6.3.30).



The conceptual basis was similar to that of the NUST in that it was inspired by the spatial planning principles of KwaBulawayo – organic in form with the most valuable assets placed off-centre. The idea of a King addressing his subjects was incorporated and the CBD symbolically represented uBulawayo (Bulawayo residents).

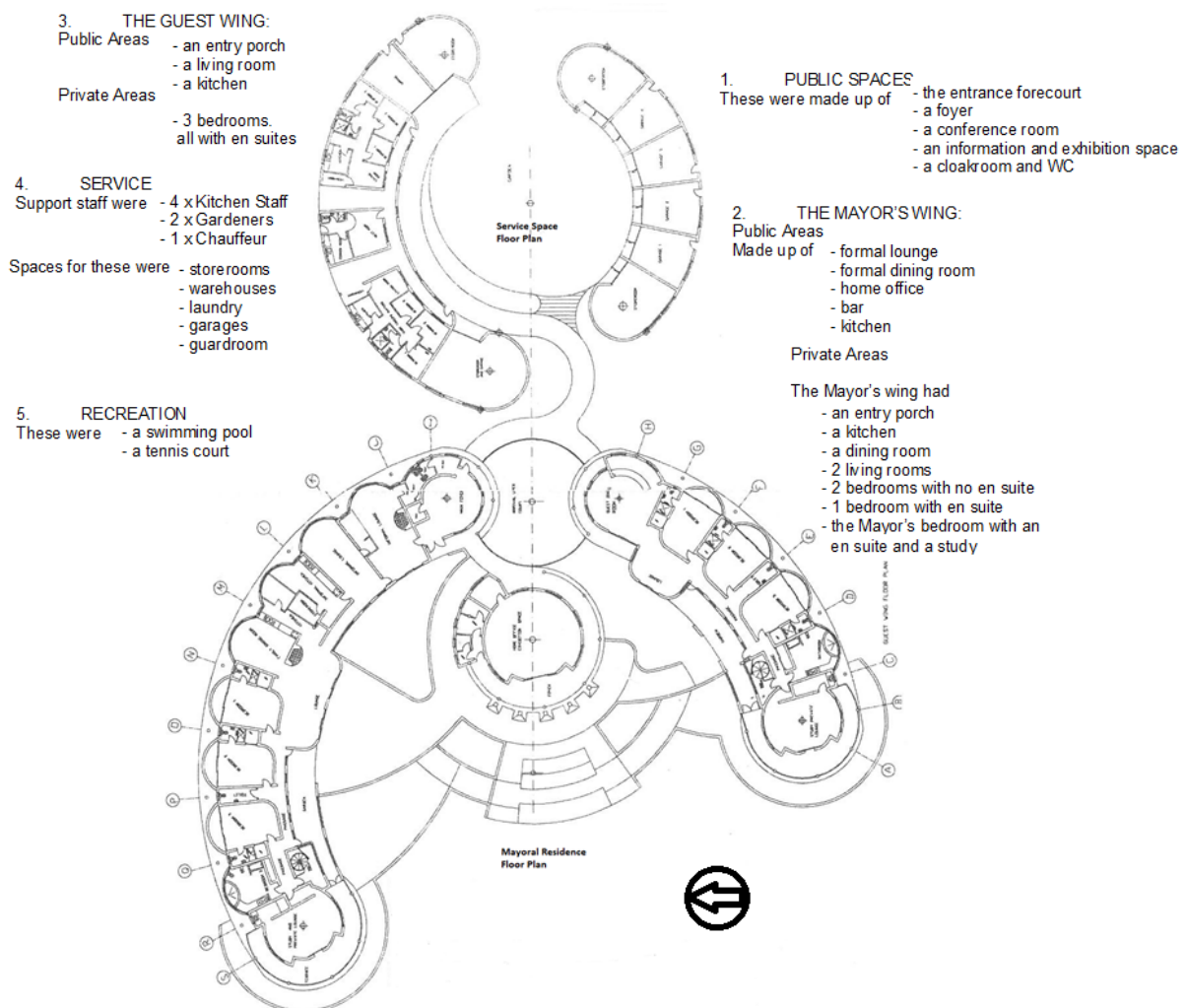
**Fig. 6.3.15: The integration of building forms and circulation (Mthethwa, 2011: 227)**

As a result, a civic space was left on site that was embraced by the two wings in front of the Mayoral Home Office which also symbolically represented the King's back-rest tree. The difference between the two approaches was that the design of the Bulawayo Mayoral Residence was taken into three-dimensional design and the forms were informed by traditional amaNdebele architecture discussed in this section and Section 5.3.



**Fig. 6.3.16: A perspective of the proposed Mayoral Residence (Mthethwa, 2011: 234)**

The drum flanked by the two Mayoral Residence wings was the Mayoral Home Office (Fig. 6.3.17) that was considered to be the nerve centre of the residence, overlooking a civic space below. The three-dimensional design is a reflection of vernacular architecture – cone on drum (Fig. 6.3.16). The Service Court to the east was considered a point of arrival and had a surprise element as one went up the slope to a magnificent view into the CBD. The building form embraces the civility of the public – people to be served.



**Fig. 6.3.17: The proposed Mayoral Residence plan with its chest-horns formation (Mthethwa, 2011: 219)**

The voice of Mthwakazi is growing increasingly louder and is clearly demonstrated on social and political platforms throughout the region. Built environment professionals need to engage with this voice. The moral is to address internal colonisation within formerly European colonised countries – the so-called independent African states.

Cultural and political oppression or subjugation of one group by another will never be the answer.

This section examined the making of isiNdebele built forms and the underlying principles, setting the scene for an Afrocentric response. African built environments should be designed and built in such a way that they are sensitive to the connection between the cosmos and human existence. This was demonstrated by means of a sophisticated academic argument as well as practicalities in rural Mthwakazi. The following section focuses on the civic centre in the Capital of Mthwakazi region – Bulawayo.

## 6.4 ANALYSIS OF THE CIVIC PRECINCT

The Bulawayo Civic Centre is generally off-centre in the greater scheme of the CBD. It was closer to European residential suburbs and thus easily accessible to that part of the population. After independence, the population became more diverse and the civic nature of the precinct has thus been accentuated. The Afrocentric issues discussed in this thesis drive the discussion on this important part of the city. The following sub-section discusses historical and social contextual issues.

The Bulawayo Civic Centre is analysed through the Afrocentric lenses constructed through the discourse thus far. These are made up of the theoretical background set out in the background to the study and the empirical data gathered in and around Bulawayo in rural Mthwakazi regions through interviewing various informants. Both sources of the tissues of the lenses are treated at an analytical level, thus deducing outcomes that are likely to directly impact design processes in the region. The context is considered to be historical, social, political and cosmological.

The Bulawayo Civic Centre is made up of three major buildings: the City Hall, the Revenue Hall and the Tower Block (Fig. 6.4.1). The City Hall houses the large City Hall, small City Hall, Council Chamber, Mayor's Parlour and Town Clerk and Council's Offices.



- [illegible]

**Fig. 6.4.1: The Bulawayo Civic Centre in context (Adapted from Google, 9/2/2018)**





**Plate 6.4.1: The City Hall. View from the western end entrance into Council Chambers (Author)**



With its colonnaded facades at the west entrance of the Municipal Building, and on the northern and southern entrances of the large City Hall, it is a worthy home for the seat of city administration, and a spacious venue for a large variety of social and cultural activities, among which regular performances of the Bulawayo Philharmonic Orchestra rank most highly (Jack and Bolze, 1979: 121). The Town Clock and Chimes were set in motion on 4 November 1940 by long-time resident of the city, Elwyn Chimes (Jack and Bolze, 1979: 122) (Plate 6.4.1).



**Plate 6.4.2: A colourful market place for carvings and various curios for local and international tourists (A – in Fig. 6.4.1) (Author, June 2018)**

The civic nature of the buildings meant that they had to accommodate the public and create quiet places for such – an activity that continues to date (Plates 6.4.3 – 6.4.5). The perimeter area was marked by a palisade, a feature that is still observed in homesteads in settlements in rural Mthwakazi regions (Plates 6.4.6 and 6.4.7). The sitting areas (Plate 6.4.3) (A – in Fig. 6.4.1) are reminiscent of traditional resting places

under a tree were social activities used to take place. Sitting areas took into account climatic factors through adding water features.



**Plate 6.4.3:**  
City residents taking a quiet rest in the shade in the landscaped grounds of the City Hall (A – in Fig. 6.4.1) (Author, June 2018)



**Plate 6.4.4:** View into sitting areas (Google, accessed 14 June 2018).





**Plate 6.4.5: The perimeter fencing around the City Hall (Author, June 2018)**



**Plate 6.4.6: A homestead showing a transparent perimeter fence – a pallisade.**



**A – View to the entrance**



**B – View from west entrance**



**C – Arrival place in a homestead**



**D – Place of arrival and rest**

**Plate 6.4.7: Comparative entrance and resting places around the City Hall (B and D) (Google, accessed 20/7/2018) and a traditional homestead in Tsholotsho in rural Mthwakazi (A and C) (Author)**

Another feature that is common in isiNdebele homesteads is the place of arrival which is considered to be civic in nature. Most isiNdebele homesteads have a place of arrival (*inkundla* or *idale*) either just inside or outside the perimeter fence (Plates 6.4.7 A and C). In times gone by, this was reserved for men with the female arrival point being in and around the kitchen area (*umkulu*).

The Tower Block houses City Health, the City Engineer, Building and Amenities and the City Treasurer – A, B and C (Fig. 6.4.1). These functions can be considered to be “storage” of what the city harvests from rate payers (revenue collection) – the grain silos in a traditional isiNdebele homestead. Being in a relatively eastern



direction, they reflect what most informants considered to be the female domain in a traditional homestead where grain silos are located.

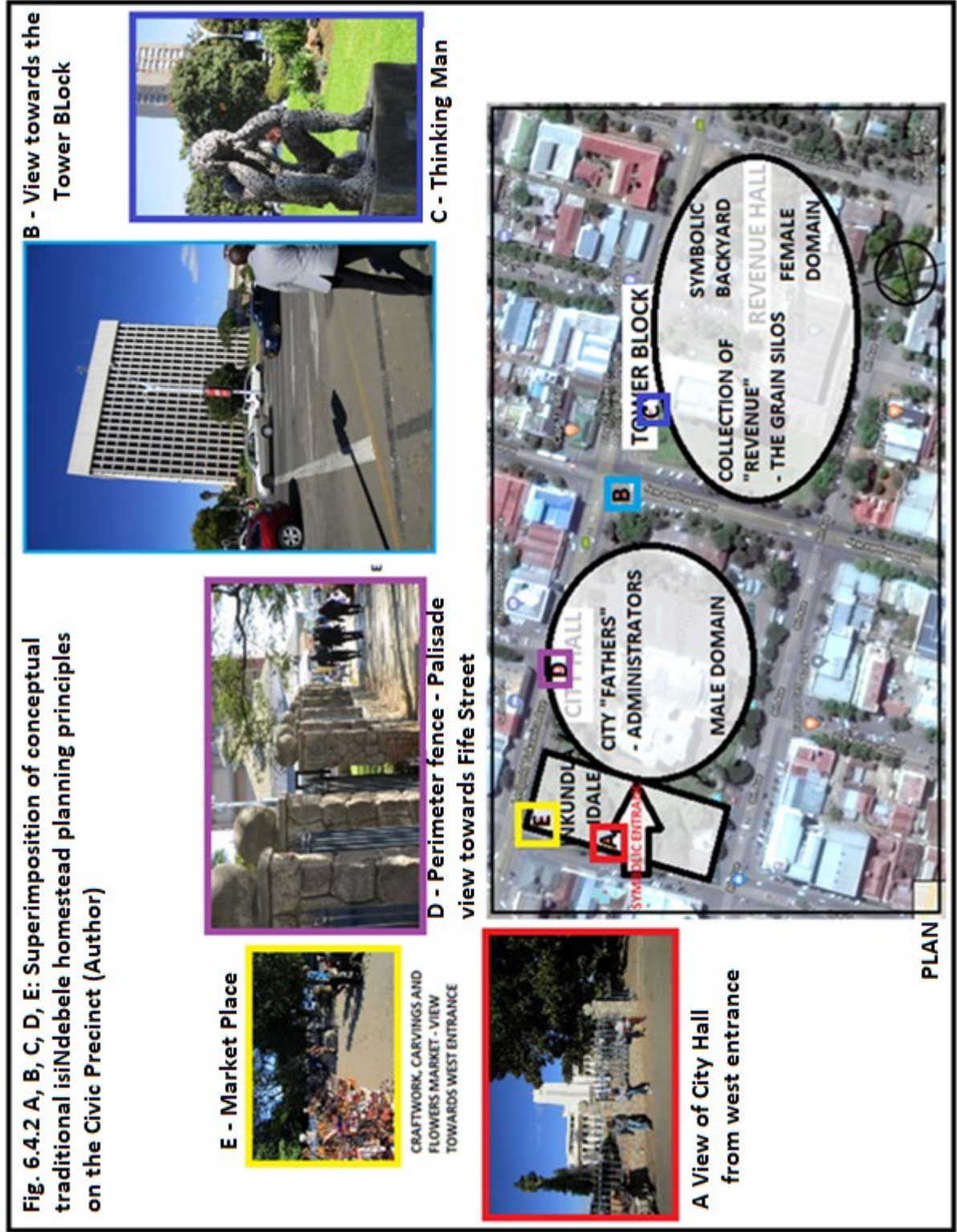
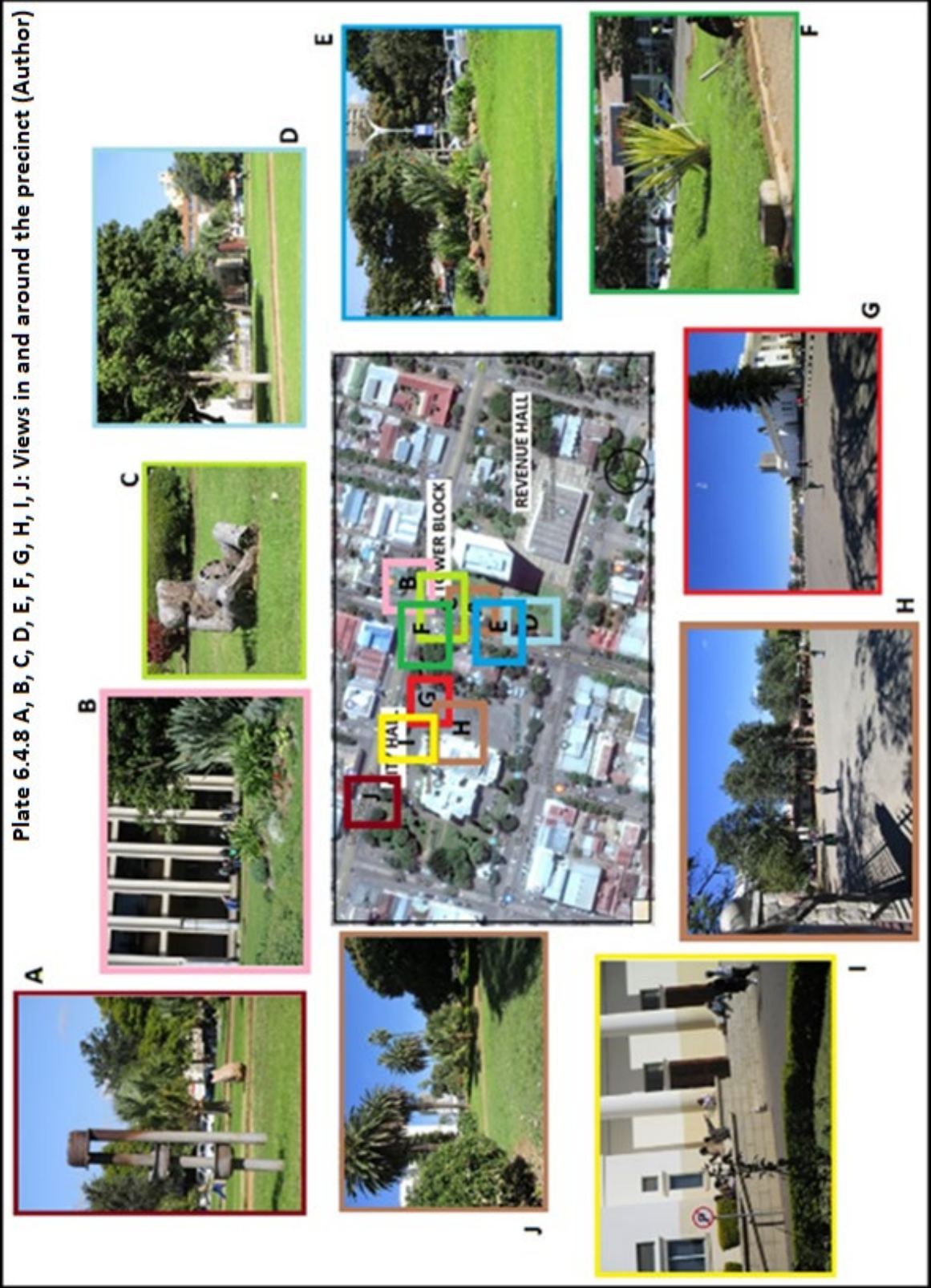
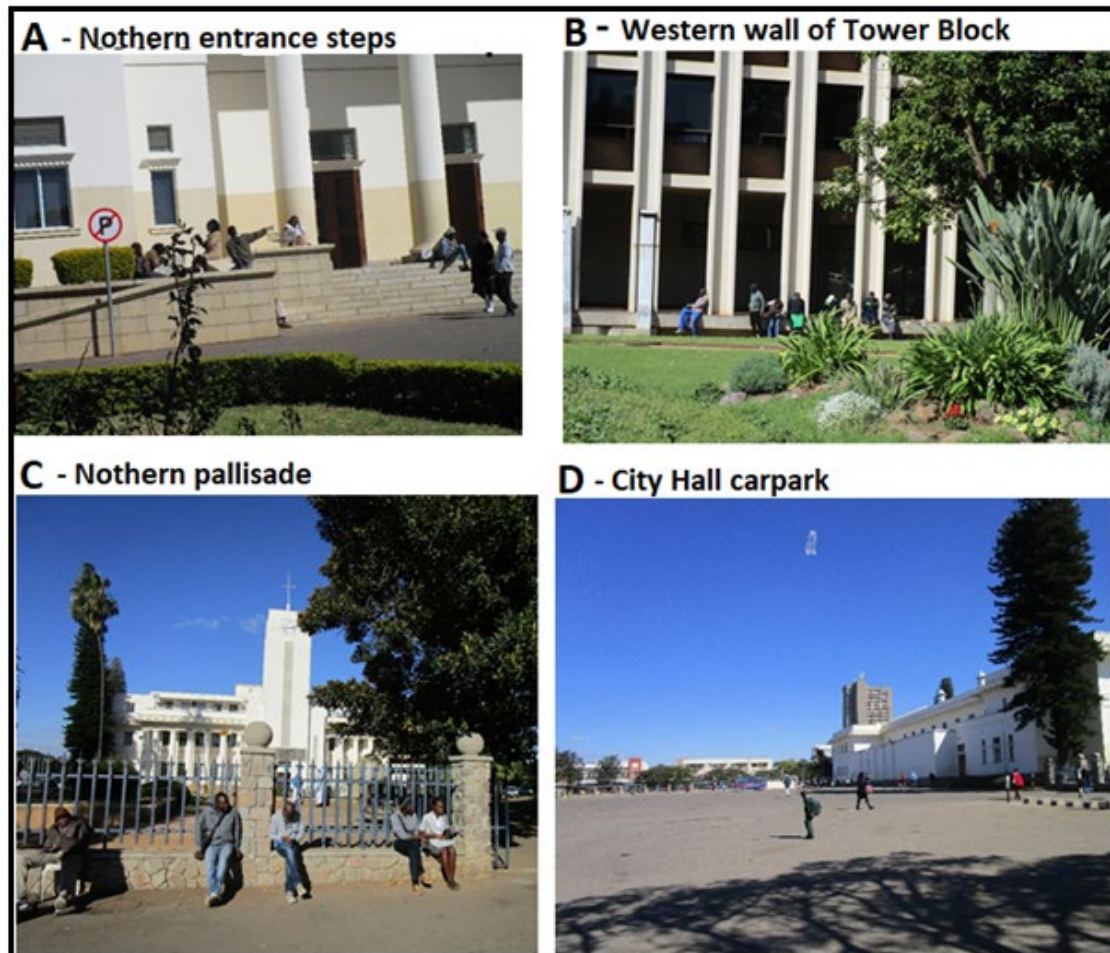


Plate 6.4.8 A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J: Views in and around the precinct (Author)





Most informants interviewed were in and around the civic precinct. Images around precinct focused on sculptures (Fig. 6.4.3 A and C; Plate 6.4.2 C), public sitting areas landscaping (Plate 6.4.8 D, E, F and J) and views into and out of the precinct.



**Plate 6.4.8 A, B, C, D: Undesignated sitting areas in and around the Civic Precinct. These show lack of provision for placemaking elements. (Author)**

The civic precinct does not have sufficient resting areas for the public to create a truly civic space. Currently people sit randomly and some places not designed for such (Fig. 6.4.8 A, B and C).

Other features that had a potential to inspire Afrocentric placemaking and architecture are landscaping elements such as lighting features, statues, carving etc. that were built into the precinct after independence. These include a Man playing Mbira – a musical instrument. This is considered to be a postcolonial colonial feature in the region as it represents a Shona musical instrument (Plate 6.4.9).





**Plate 6.4.8: Man playing mbira – a musical instrument. C – in Fig. 6.4.9. (Author)**



**Plate 6.4.10: Besides the “Thinking man”, there are solar lighting structures that have been added to the landscape (Author).**



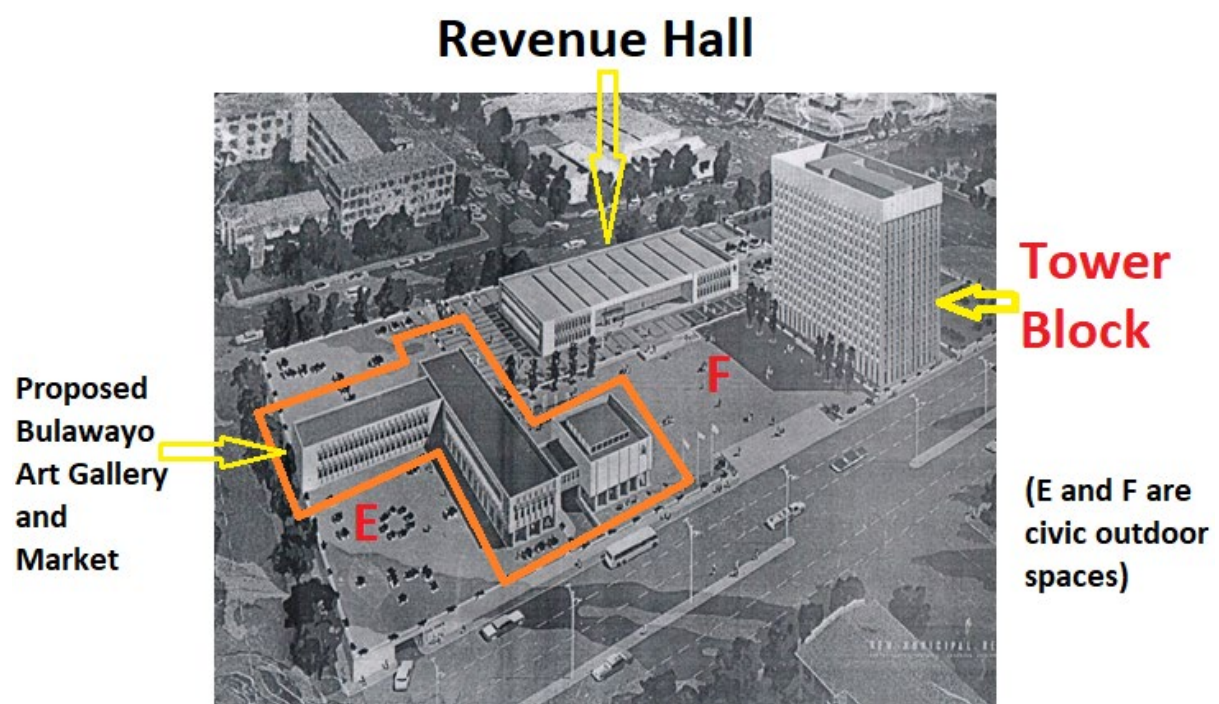
There is no effort in being creative with respect to design features such as those solar lights in the landscape (Plate 6.4.10. These could be designed to be drawn from the traditional utensils and artefacts. The Matopo landscape should provide an inspiration to such efforts Plates 6.4.11 and 6.4.12).



**Plate 6.4.11:** The finely balanced rocks have a considerable psychological impact on Mthwakazi residents (Google, accessed 20 July 2018)



**Plate 6.4.12:** The hilly Matopo with its characteristic boulders with a dam, the informant's brainchild with the help of international donors (Sanele Mkhwananzi)



**Fig. 6.4.4:** An artist's impression of the Tower Block, Revenue Hall and the building in the foreground on the far left where the Automobile Association is currently housed, which was not built to this design proposal (Jack and Bolze, 1979: 150)

Had the Art Gallery and Market (Fig. 6.4.4) been constructed as planned this would have provided a feature that was common in both traditional environments and Western settlements such as the agora.



**Plate 6.4.13: Northern entrance into the City Hall. Outdoor space clearly designed for vehicular access with no provision for public resting areas.**

As part of triangulation, empirical data was collected through interviews and observations in various settings. The researcher carried out focus group interviews in and around the civic precinct

after which respondents completed a Repertory Grid.

The ages of the respondents that were interviewed in and around the Civic Precinct are summarised in Table 6.4.1. The key question around the Repertory Grid Technique was: How the informants ranked the Civic Precinct space against *inkundlalidale* or fireplace in a traditional isiNdebele homestead planning with respect to the given elements and constructs. Elements were then rated (1 = very poor and 10 = Excellent).

The majority were in and around the outdoor sitting areas near the City Hall well and the craft market along Fife Street (Plate 6.4.2). *Idale/inkundla* is generally located to the west and, as the nerve centre of homestead planning activities, reflects where the “City Fathers” are located (Fig. 6.4.2). From this analysis, the building forms are found wanting as they lack the basic principles of African cosmological orientation: regularity, seasonality, periodicity, and rhythmicity. The symbolic representation of these virtues is completely outside the existential paradigm of an African – connectivity to the African cosmology and a response to his/her ecological setting as was the case in precolonial times.

Ages	<20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	>80	Total
Number	7	5	6	10	4	2	1	1	36
%age	19	14	17	27	11	6	3	3	100

**Table 6.4.1: Ages of informants in and around the Civic Centre (Author)**



	Constructs	Ave	FIELDWORK ELEMENTS				
			1 Afrocentric (Ubuntu)	2 Coloniality (umbuso wo ncindezelo)	3 Symbolic interactionism (Ubuntu bendawo)	4 Imagery (isithombe)	5 Existentialism (ubukhona bendawo)
A	Location	4.4	3	8	5	3	3
B	Site form	5.4	7	8	3	4	5
C	Building forms	4.8	2	9	6	3	4
D	Colour	5	4	8	4	4	5
E	Materials	4.8	2	8	4	6	4
F	Landscaping	5	3	9	6	4	3
G	Physical response	5.4	7	8	5	4	3
H	Cultural response	4.4	2	9	4	3	4
I	Historical response	5	6	9	4	3	3
	<b>Average score</b>		3	<b>8.6</b>	4.6	3.8	3.8

**Table 6.4.2: Repertory Grid Technique (RGT) scores are averages of selected informants. How would you rank the Civic Centre space against *inkundlalidale* or fireplace in a traditional isiNdebele homestead planning with respect to the given elements and constructs? Rate elements (1 = very poor and 10 = Excellent) (Author)**

The “circular” boulders that stand atop each other at the nearby Matopo were not taken into consideration in the building forms. The Mpumalanga Provincial Legislature discussed in Chapter Four was designed to reflect the expansive rolling grasslands of the Highveld with its clear sky and crisp air, where the land drops sharply down South Africa’s eastern escarpment to the sub-tropical Lowveld plains with their abundance of wildlife and unspoilt nature as far as the eye can see. The Bulawayo Civic Precinct lacks this kind of response to reflect its symbolic interactionism sensitivities.

After superimposing the general traditional layout, the planning of the civic centre is not far off and simply becomes a hybrid version. If the planning layout was translated into 3-D it would have been more successful. Hence, the Civic Precinct is accurately viewed as predominantly Eurocentric (highlighted figure) as reflected by the data collected from informants in and around the precinct (Table 6.4.2).

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

Civic spaces play a critical role in placemaking and a sense of belonging is accentuated by forms that users can identify with. Most colonial places simply ignored local identity issues or they were addressed superficially as is the case in Bulawayo. As noted previously, the worst kind of colonialism is internal colonisation that should not happen in any formerly colonised country.

This study proposes a city whose future architectural and urban design engages with the region's Afrocentric placemaking and architecture that encapsulate its past in its totality and a common future that embodies the aspirations of all its citizens. The nature and typology of the placemaking and architecture for the city can be identified using the model that is proposed in the following chapter which sets the parameters for Afrocentric sources as guided by this research effort.

# CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Everything under the sun has a centre, a home, a comfort zone, and a place of safety that is tranquil, a place of refuge. Catholic Christians have the Vatican, Muslims have Mecca and Jews have Jerusalem. What do Africans have? As has been revealed by the placemaking elements found in Afrocentric sources identified in this thesis, they have Africa and its gods. Through studying the cosmos and all its “heavenly” bodies, an African has found comfort in representing and symbolising this through cultural practices that draw on ecology and the cosmos itself. The African mind understood the cosmos and translated it into creative ideas that have been expressed by hand through production processes as part of cultural practices. Cultural practices have been tempered by ecological settings. This research aimed to identify placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources as generators of contemporary urban form with specific reference to Bulawayo and its environs.

Much as today’s generation Africans’ great, great, great grandparents saw the moon with the naked eye. This represents permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, and endlessness, etc. For an African, these qualities are achieved through sexual reproduction (Mr. Pathisa Nyathi interview, June 2018; also see Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 10). Reproduction creates a cycle of birth, growth, death and rebirth. To the African mind, circularity and movement capture what the cosmos represents. With respect to symbolic interactionism, circularity and movement is how the cosmos reflects itself to human beings; hence, the criticality of the circle and movement in African art and architecture.

This study presented a fresh perspective on the meaning in African built forms by going beyond the obvious – driven by Afrocentrist approach to identity, symbolism and sculpture with respect to placemaking and architecture in urban built forms. It went beyond the mundane to draw inspiration from the cosmos itself and ecology. The

following section discusses the study's contribution to new knowledge, especially in the Afrocentric knowledge industry with specific reference to built environments.

## 7.2 AFROCENTRIC PLACEMAKING IDENTIFICATION TECHNIQUES: Contribution to knowledge

Every creature has its ways of doing things, a way of life that enables it to cope with its ecological setting. Symbolic representation of fertility, continuity and eternity is critical in this process. A baby is born, grows, develops, grows old, degenerates and dies (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2016: 10). This cycle of birth, growth and death continues eternally. It is about identity and one's world view. In Africa, this world view is captured by storytelling, language, metaphors, proverbs, needs and perceptions.

### 7.2.1 Basis for and application of a proposed model

African languages are rich in storytelling and in most cases it is used as a tool to impart morals and good behaviour (see sub-section 3.5.4 on *maat*). It is also used as an educational tool. Stories and folklore are passed down from one generation to the next. They were usually told in the evenings after dinner before going to bed. The children would gather in a semi-circle facing the storyteller who would most likely be an elderly person. One such story is the one that Asante narrates in the opening chapter of his book, *An Afrocentric Manifesto* (2007). It is about an eagle that was flying low past a chicken run with its baby in tow on its claws. Gusty winds blew the baby off her claws and it fell into the chicken yard. The mother eagle could not identify her baby despite an exhaustive search. She gave up the search and flew away with a large flock of eagles.

As the baby eagle grew in the chicken yard, it began to see itself as a chicken. Surrounded as it was by chickens, the little eagle received a chicken education, wore chicken clothes, ate chicken food, and attempted to imitate the chicken walk and mannerisms of the chickens. Every day the little eagle practiced its chicken education. Its curriculum was strictly chicken curriculum, one made expressly for chickens, to assist chickens living in the chicken yard as good chickens. When the little eagle spoke, it spoke chicken language because it did not know eagle language. It carried its

head like the chickens because it had only a faint knowledge, elementary knowledge of what an eagle style or fashion or idea might have been. All traces of its earlier eagle training had been forgotten. In everything, the little eagle acted like a chicken until one day it started to think of itself as a chicken.

(Asante, 2007: 1)

The story goes on to relate that one day an old eagle was flying past the chicken yard without any specific mission. Something caught its attention and it saw something that looked like an eagle. The old eagle perched on a nearby tree and asked the young eagle to come and talk to her. The young eagle thought that may be the old eagle was talking to someone else and replied, "I am not an eagle, I am a chicken". With all the aplomb of her age, the old eagle narrated a long history of eagles. She then asked the young eagle to fly over to the tree. The young eagle insisted that he could not fly because he is a chicken. The old eagle insisted that the young eagle flap his wings and fly up the tree. The young eagle discovered that he could fly and perched on the tree. It looked down the chicken yard and said it was not aware that it could fly. The old eagle asked the young eagle to fly with her and they flew into the setting sun.

A powerful folktale, indeed - an African legend that portrays the impact of colonialism on indigenous inhabitants of the continent – that have been proverbially fed on chicken food, chicken education, chicken mannerism and habits. All this with dire consequences on indigenous world view and built environments.

Folklores are vehicles of intergenerational knowledge transfer in most indigenous societies. The day the little eagle flew was the day it learnt its true identity and history; the day it learnt about its universe. Having lived under colonialism for over a century, the African needs to believe that he/she can fly.

This message applies to all walks of an African life. In fact, it can apply to any communities that are under oppressive rule, even postcolonial colonised ones. The built environment can learn immensely from African poems, proverbs, folktales, idioms, metaphors, myths, cosmology, and the general African way of life. African languages are rich and built environment professionals need to connect to African cultures. This would foster creative development of Afrocentric placemaking and



architecture in contemporary urban built form, especially with reference to civic spaces.

The postcolonial colonialism conditions in Matabeleland have been apparent since the official end of the Gukurahundi genocide and the spirit of pushback is well under way. This mood was pervasive amongst Mthwakazi informants. It is a question of the eagle having grown up. It is speaking like an eagle and no longer wants chicken food. Afrocentric cosmology and nature (rivers, mountains, stars - an African world view) should function in unison to produce uniquely African built environments inspired by these Afrocentric sources – from the universe through to nature around this beautiful continent.

Proverbs also serve to communicate indigenous beliefs and values. African proverbs are a rich source of information on indigenous value systems. Messages on morality, ethics, thrift, and industry are often hidden in these proverbs. These may have been missed by many foreign researchers because of language barriers, leading to much distortion of native value systems (Ayttey, 2006: 59).

The Yoruba of Nigeria state: “However small the needle, a chicken cannot swallow it.” This conveys the message that an apparently weaker individual can prove difficult to vanquish (Bascom, 1984: 98; Ayttey, 2006: 61). Storytelling is another means by which Africans inculcate values. Animals feature prominently in African children’s stories. For example in Ashanti stories, the spider (*anansi*) plays various roles: the star, the villain, and the bumbling idiot (Ayttey, 2006: 61).

In some stories, he is clever and cunning; in others, he falls victim to his own mischief (“hoisted by his own petard”). Among the Kuranako of Sierra Leone, the hare is associated with cleverness, ingenuity, and adroitness (*hankili*) and cunning (*kio*) (Ayttey, 2006: 62).

Certain families or people in some traditional African societies adopt storytelling as their profession and become known as *griots* because of their sharp memory, wit, and affableness. Their stories seek to inform, instil values, and preserve the memory of certain important events among the community – for example, venerated rulers of the


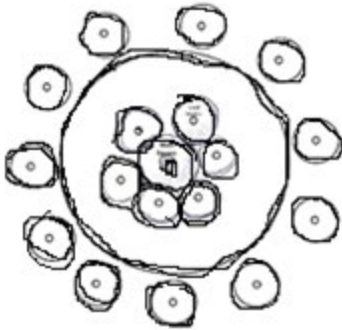




past, war stories, victories, births, deaths, marriages and anything else of significance (Ayittey, 2006: 62). A Zulu proverb goes: “Copying everybody else all the time, the monkey cut his throat”. Many modern African heads of state are not fit to be president “for copying foreign systems blindly” (Ayittey, 2006: 64). Modern African elites could use a little better education other than that which equips them with “foreign tastes” and an inimitable propensity to imitate. Indeed, many a traditional ruler and elder have lamented the production of graduates with little respect for culture, morals, and the capacity to do anything right (Ayittey, 2006: 64).

The basis of the proposed model to identify placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources as generators of contemporary urban built form takes its inspiration from the uniquely African cosmological orientation discussed in Chapter Six. The Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) knowledge model is the proposed technique to identify elements to achieve locally appropriate built environments in African contexts. The following sub-section sets out this proposed model.

### **7.2.2 The Collective Centred Afrocentric Placemaking (CCAP) Model**

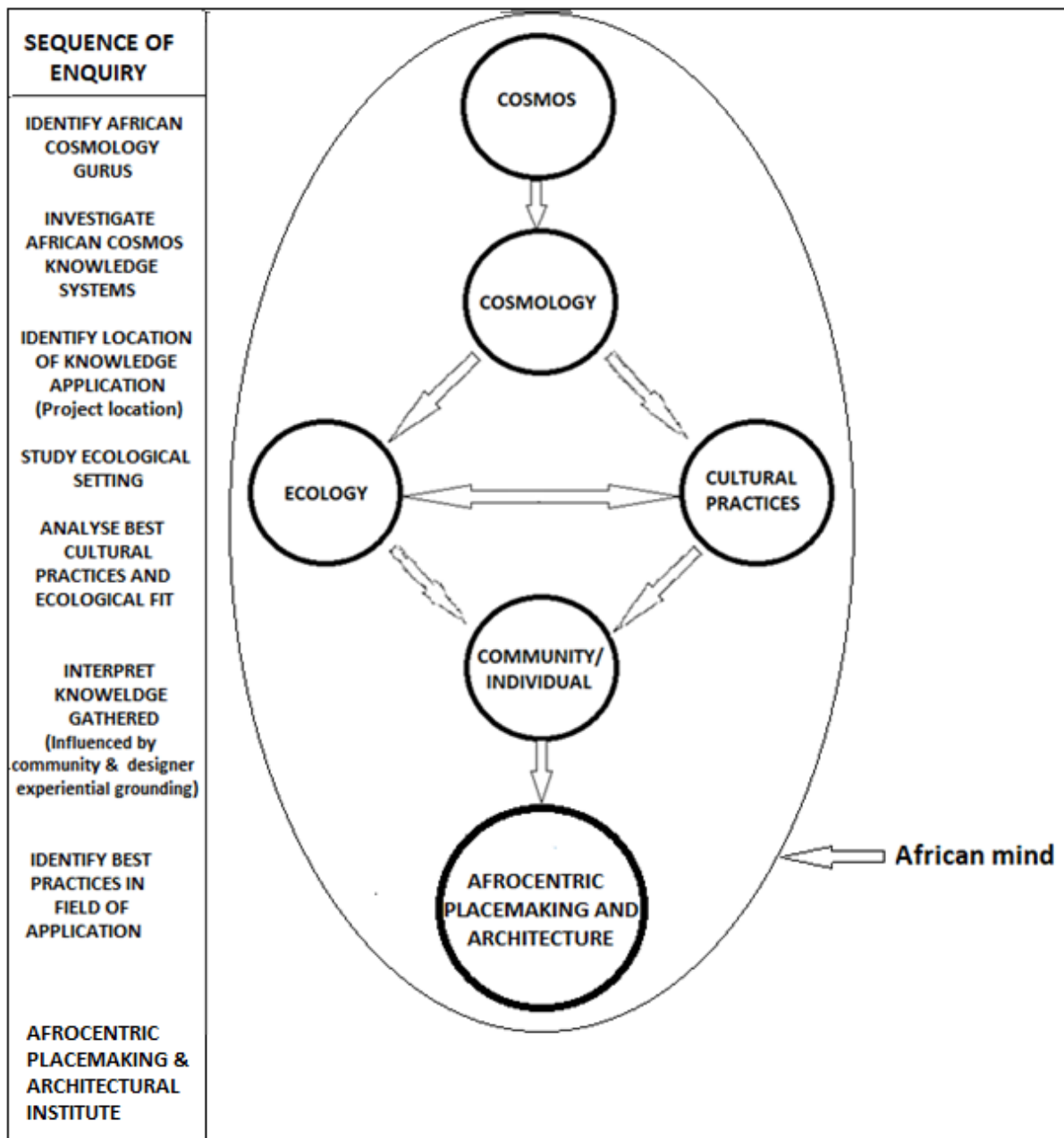
The discussion thus far culminates in a proposed model to identify placemaking elements drawn from Afrocentric sources as generators of contemporary urban built form. These sources are the cosmos, ecology and cultural practices. The model begins with the cosmos that flows into cosmology – the need to study and interpret the cosmos from an African perspective. The interplay between cultural practices and ecology would then impact on the built environment.

At a higher level, cultural practices are influenced by interpretation of the cosmos that develops through coping with the environment such that the cyclical concept of movement is not thrown into chaos. Therefore, these Afrocentric sources should offer placemaking characteristics that embody the basic tenets of the African world view: regularity, seasonality, periodicity, and rhythmicity. All these tenets are embodied in the circular form and the movement of celestial bodies with earthly nature complementing these virtues.

IMAGE	ANALYSIS
<p>PRECOLONIAL</p> 	
<p>COLONIAL/CONTEMPORARY (status quo)</p> 	
<p>FUTURE TRENDS</p> 	

**Table 7.2.1: Justification for proposed future built environment trends based on Afrocentric placemaking and architecture (Author)**

The foundation for the proposed model can be summarised using precolonial and colonial Bulawayo settlement forms (Table. 7.2.1). Similar organic settlements can be observed across black Africa (Amankwah-Ayeh, 1996).



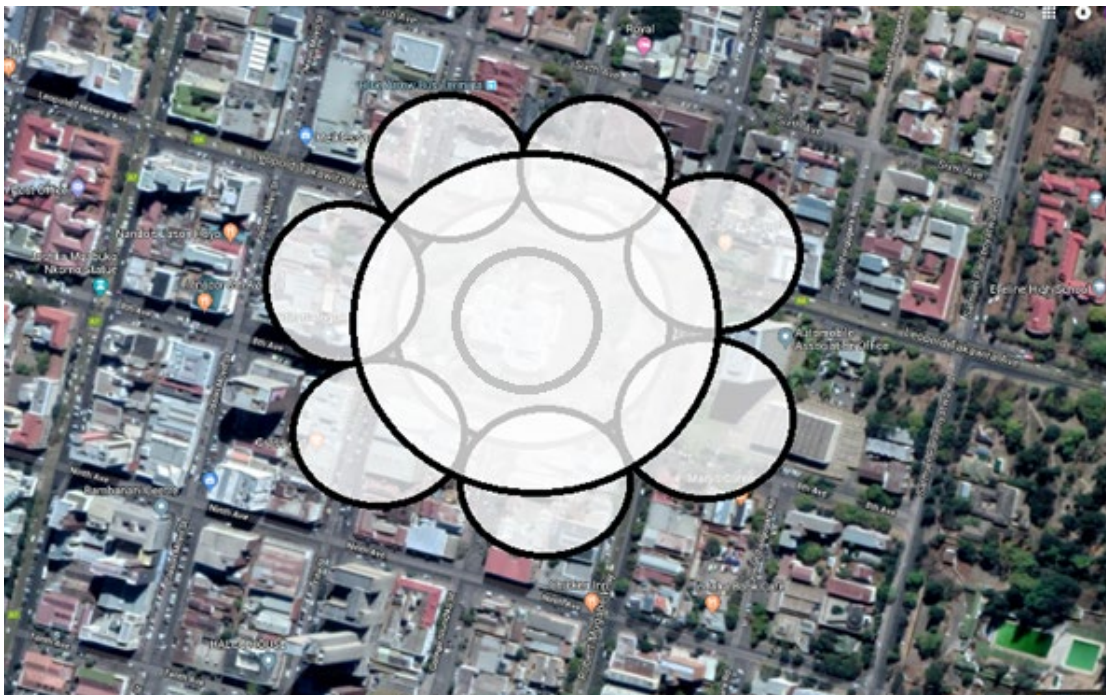
**Fig. 7.2.1: The CCAP Knowledge Model – identifying areas that are considered to be Afrocentric sources – the cosmos, ecology, cultural practices and expertise within individuals and communities (Author)**

This analysis emphasises the circularity of traditional settlement patterns and, by extension, their relationship to the cosmos. It also shows non-consideration of the precolonial existentiality of African settings.

The proposed philosophical system in Fig. 7.2.1 sets parameters that are broadly defined as Afrocentric sources and the interrelationships therein, personifying the African mind as discussed in sub-section 6.2.2. The African mind studies the cosmos,

interprets it and expresses it using the hands in various ways such as moulding, painting, engraving, building, etc.

Most African built environments have maintained the status quo, with rectilinear settlement forms whose identity is predominantly Eurocentric. Colonial boundaries perpetuate the status quo and promote internal postcolonial colonialism to the detriment of plurality in built forms.

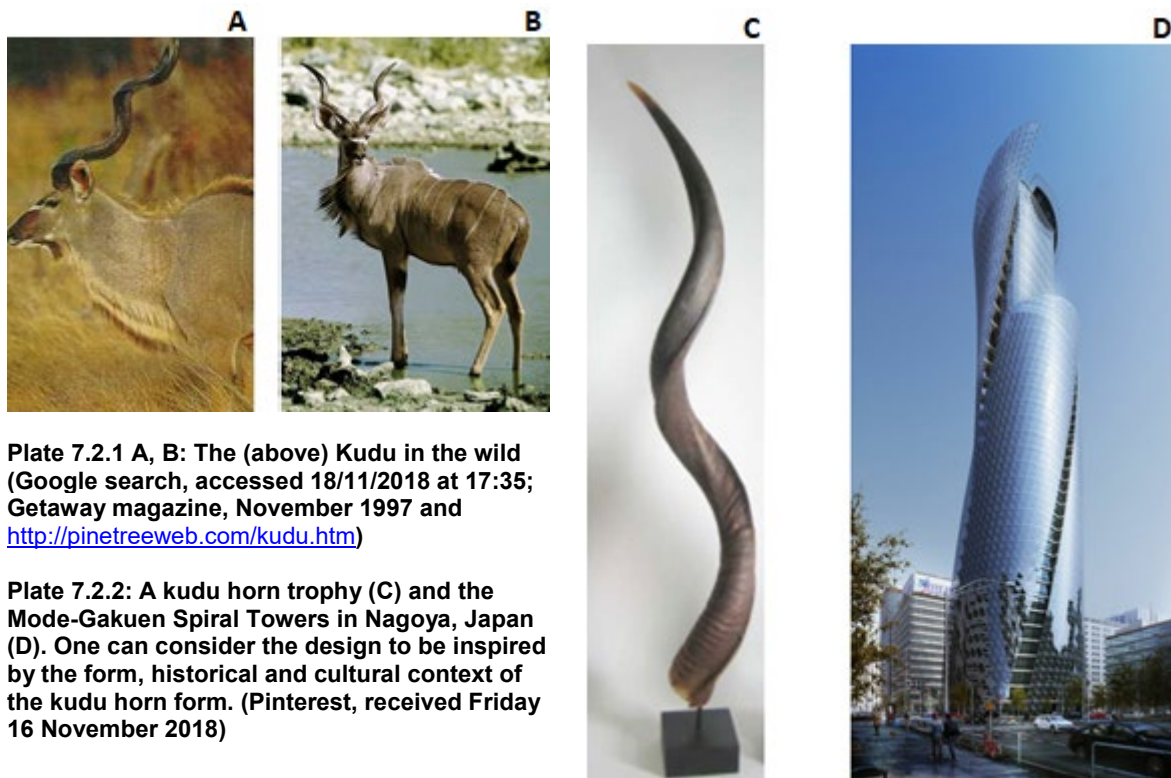


**Fig. 7.2.2: Proposed future trends applied to the Bulawayo Civic Precinct informed by CCAP Knowledge Model (Author and Google maps)**

The Pan-Africanist, Prof Ajayi (2005: 45), contends that the African cosmological orientation determines the belief systems and practices of the relationships between human beings (the ancestors, the living, and the unborn), nature, (as organic rather than a pure mechanical thing that has no life or soul), and the deities. The belief here is that “I am because you are” (Ajayi, 2005; Tutu, n.d.) which encapsulates Nguni wisdom that states: “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” (a human being is what they are because of others – a human being is a product of humanity). One of the outcomes of this study set out to unravel an African precolonial mind-set and how it acknowledged the relationship between the natural environment and built forms through interpreting the cosmos – a skill lost through colonisation.



Language is the vehicle that carries an African's cosmological orientation. The African posits a dual world comprising physical/material and spiritual/intangible phenomena (Nyathi, 2018: 9). This duality cuts across all the facets of an African existence. An oxen is a vehicle of reaching out to the ancestral world and its body hide colour is associated with specific clans. The precinct in Fig. 7.2.2 can benefit from angling in such a cosmological and ecological terrain with respect to architectural form making as definers of civic outdoor spaces. The emphasis is on sculpturing symbolised circularity.



The wildlife has had an indelible mark on the African identity especially in Southern Africa as indicated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Sep/Oct, 2008) with respect to clan names. To an African, language is a source of identity and repository of people's clan experiences, critical values, principles, traditions and culture in general (ibid). This recalls the Ndebele warriors and their unique method of military signalling, using the deep note of a kudu horn (*ibhoso*) (Plate 7.2.1 A and B and Plate 7.2.2 C and D) to carry coded signals over long distances (<http://pinetreeweb.com/kudu.htm>) and this can be symbolically employed as a civic building form implying communication with the city residents far and wide. A twining of circularity as drawn from the cosmological

bodies, the game, as drawn from the ecological setting of the CCAP knowledge model, could conglomerate to give ambience in Plate 7.2.2.

One of the strongest features of the physical/material and spiritual/intangible phenomena is represented by snakes in most African cultures. In isiNguni cultures ancestors are referred to as “*izinyoka*” which literally means snakes. *Izinyoka* are basically the guardian angels of the living. The snake transcends the ecological and cultural practices domains of CCAP knowledge model and produces a wide variety of options for the design of Afrocentric built forms (Plate 7.2.3)



**Plate 7.2.3: (L) The Cobra Tower in Kuwait imitating intimacy and violence – symbolising the good and the evil that confounds the living in an Afrocentric cosmology (Pinterest, received Friday 16 November 2018)**



**Plate 7.2.4: (R) Snakes entangled in a duel of violence and intimacy (Goggle Search. Accessed 19/11/2018)**

Wilfred D. Hambly (1929: 656) summarised the serpent beliefs in Africa into the following headings:

- Pythons worship
- Rainbow-guardian-snakes and rain
- Snake-souls, reincarnation, transformation, totemism and
- Immunity, snake-medicine, general superstitions.

As was indicated earlier by Cosmas Nyamutswa (2017), and Nyathi and Chikomo (2013) the feminine figure was associated with fertility and fecundity. African artists have produced sculptures representing the female figure without a head, arms and legs with undue prominence given to breasts and hips (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2017: 67) (Plate 7.2.6 and Fig. 7.2.3). The Moscow Fashion Palace (Plate 7.2.5) is a graphic intention of the proposed future CCAP knowledge model ambience design resolution. This is the origin of the chevron pattern. The chevron motif is a two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional reality. The more circular, curvaceous, voluptuous the feminine body is the more beautiful it is to the African mind as it approaches form representivity of heavenly bodies.



**Plate: 7.2.5: The Moscow Fashion Palace took cue from fashion, dance, art, Russian culture and femininity and delivered through skin and bones philosophy (Pinterest, received Friday 16 November 2018)**



**Plate: 7.2.6: Due emphasis given to the proportions of breasts and hip to emphasis fertility. (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2017: 67)**



**Fig. 7.2.3: African moral campus on female genitalia did not allow the proliferation of nudity (Nyathi and Chikomo, 2017: 66)**





**Fig. 7.2.3: Chinese New Town (SAA Architects) Klaus Philipsen, FAIA [What is Urban Design?](#) 28**  
November 2014 (Google search: accessed 12/10/2018)



**Fig. 7.2.4: 2017 Indiana Grown Monumental Marketplace (Google search, accessed: 12/10/2018: 14:38)**





**Plate 7.2.1: Aerial view of the Durban CBD showing the Centrum site (Author, Google maps, accessed 15/10/2018 at 12:47pm)**

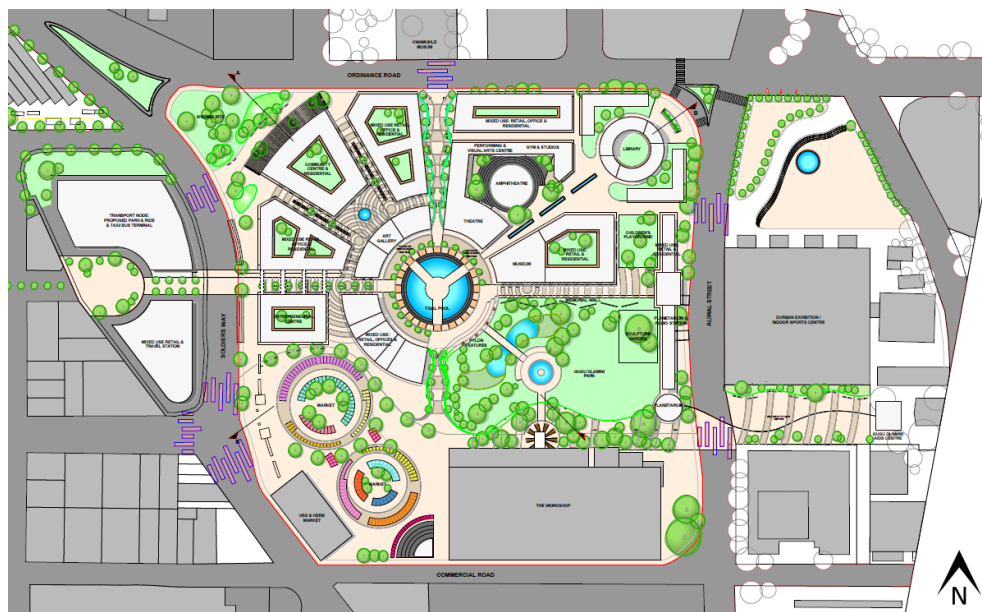


**Fig. 7.2.5: The 3-D urban design massing of the proposed Centrum site project showing circular design with civic buildings at the core (M.Arch 1 Advanced Architectural Design Reports, UKZN, 2010)**



This language narration retracing the steps from precolonial times through a contemporary African mind's eye is what the CCAP knowledge model proposes for the Bulawayo Civic Precinct. It advocates for a circular urban design form creating a “collectively centred” civic precinct (Fig 7.2.2) whose placemaking and architecture is influenced by this conclusive discourse that links all CCAP knowledge model entities with the cosmos at its apex. This process being also applicable to urban furniture landscaping.

The Afrocentric approach to built form is diametrically opposed to the Eurocentric trends currently attaining in most African cities with respect to placemaking and architecture. The proposed CCAP knowledge model advocates for back to basics with respect to the African worldview. The proposed future Afrocentric approach to built forms acknowledges the existentiality of colonial and contemporary settlements, thus producing an Afrocentric hybridised civic precinct in the spirit of the images in Figs. 7.2.4 to 7.2.7 and Plate 7.2.1 and Plate 7.2.7.



**Fig. 7.2.7:** Centrum Site proposed Masters Project with a tidal pool forming the focus of the circular design. The tidal pool can be linked to the Matopo pool – associated with reproduction (M.Arch 1 Advanced Architectural Design Reports, UKZN, 2010)

One would argue that the Bulawayo CBD lacks a central outdoor civic space. This space should be the core of the civic buildings that lie scattered around the city. The images in the projects in this section would be a pointer as to future trends for a design approach to Afrocentric civic placemaking. The CCAP knowledge model would enable the identification of appropriate Afrocentric placemaking and architecture. This would

require further research on amaNdebele cosmology, history, culture, and the rolling granite rocks in the Matopo area and the language and customs of the Mthwakazi region in general. The importance of circular design has been adequately motivated for.

Placemaking is about collective centring with respect to the creation of built environments, it follows that these places carry the community and individuals' signatures. Those that participate in this process should be part of the community. The environments they produce are a collective reflection of their cultural practices. Their engagement with the ecology stems from their cosmological orientation and how they perceive the cosmos.

Human beings have taken to the cosmos to understand their existence and purpose on earth. This search has taken a wide range of approaches, but there are similarities in content. The African chose to view the night skies as a chalk board for sketching out his/her understanding of the universe. Heavenly bodies became the basis for recreating the universe on earth with the basic characteristics of circularity and movement being highlighted. The ecology became the medium through which cultural practices are developed by individuals and communities and this in turn was transformed by the hands into various arts that include the built form. The next section proposes the goals of the CCAP knowledge model and its future developments in the advancement of Afrocentric ideology and pragmatism with architecture at its epicentre.

### 7.3 SUGGESTED FUTURE DIRECTION: CCAP knowledge model pragmatism

This study has opened numerous doors for future development considerations. The key one being the enormity and the challenge of Afrocentricity with respect to built environment. This effort requires moral steadfastness and sustained investigations. Morality being with respect to *ubuntu*. Postcolonial colonialism is not sustainable in the long run and so are any developments around it. These investigations would be fronted by a proposed Afrocentric Placemaking and Architectural Institute (APAI). The tasks of the institute would be to:

- Create and manage the institute's Centre that would champion applied research activities as propounded by the CCAP knowledge model,
- Establish a multi-disciplinary approach to Afrocentric placemaking and architecture,
- Identify stakeholders in Afrocentrism that fosters a better understanding of an African cosmology,
- Network with international, continental and national stakeholders in the built environment especially those that are championing Afrocentrism and
- Develop a built environment curriculum that advances CCAP knowledge model research activities.

These activities of the Institute are not exhaustive but will be developed under the ambit of the CCAP knowledge model.

## 7.4 CONCLUSION

Numerous contributions are drawn from this research study one, among others, is a proposed enabling environment for Afrocentrism by identifying internal and external colonialism with the built environment contributing to this process. This should be coupled with how an African views his/her cosmology. Besides responding to local ecological dynamics, indigenous ways of viewing cosmology should be the basis for designing local African built environments. In contrast to the current situation, where dominant cultures bulldoze minor ones, the focus should be on how the cosmos is viewed by various local groups. Conceptualising placemaking and architecture that is derived from Afrocentric sources as purveyors of identity in contemporary African urban built forms is the key in this process.

The role of a place such as Africa in a globalising world is critically essential. The CCAP knowledge model is an indispensable asset in aiding this noble goal.

Eaglets are now eagles; the time has come to take to the proverbial skies and soar.

# APPENDICES

# I FIELDWORK INFORMATION

## A: GATEKEEPERS LETTER

DATE: 28 March 2017

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Majahamahle Nene Mthethwa, a PhD student in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies formally requests permission to interview staff in your institution/ department and use the data collected on /OR use the data produced by your institution. I would like to use this data for my PhD dissertation entitled:

### **“PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS IN TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS AS IDENTITY GENERATORS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN**

**BUILT FORM: A Case of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”.** The dissertation will acknowledge the ..... Bulawayo City Council ..... and the research outcomes will be shared with the ..... Bulawayo City Council ..... if requested.

Thank you

Kind regards

-----  
NAME: Majahamahle N. Mthethwa  
Supervisor. Prof. A. A. Adebayo  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
Email: [Mthethwam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthethwam@ukzn.ac.za) and : [sivani@ambroafrique.co.za](mailto:sivani@ambroafrique.co.za)

Tel number: 0027 31 260 1141, 0027 60 875 6655 and 0027 209 4122

Permission to use data granted by:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_



NAME OF INSTITUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: 28 March 2017

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am a PhD student in the School of Built Environment and Development Studies formally requests permission to interview staff in your institution/department and use the data collected on /OR use the data produced by your institution. I would like to use this data for my PhD dissertation entitled: **“PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS IN TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS AS IDENTITY GENERATORS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN BUILT FORM: A Case of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe”**

The study entails collecting empirical data from various respondents from the three Matebeleland Provinces, Bulawayo (Bulawayo City Council – Councilors and other professionals/stakeholders), Matabeleland North and South (mostly Chiefs). The empirical data collected will provide basis for collating Afrocentric design generators to be employed by architectural designers and planners and other professionals especially with respect to civic spaces.

Kind Regards

Mthethwa, M. N.

#### **B: CONSENT LETTER**

### **UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)**

**APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL  
For research with human participants**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE**

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved.

There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable, and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

### **Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research**

Date:

Greeting: (Choose a greeting appropriate for the setting - not “Dear Participant”, as this assumes enrollment).

My name is (**M N Mthethwa**) from (given below)

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research (**Spacemaking elements in traditional settlements and how they should inform the identity of contemporary civic space**). The aim and purpose of this research is to (**Gather information that would assist in the identification of spacemaking elements to inform the identity of contemporary built form**). The study is expected to enroll (**25 participants in total, five from the region, 10 from rural and urban environments and 10 from the CBD around the selected civic space, in Bulawayo and its environs**). It will involve the following procedures (**inspection of literature, interview around the region, rural and suburban area**). The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be (**six month**). The study is funded by (**self-funded**).

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts (**In Zimbabwe anything can be construed to be political and ruled criminal by government agents but have a strategy to deal with this**). We hope that the study will create the following benefits (**contribute towards future planning and urban design for Bulawayo and cities in a similar geo-political situation**). The researcher must disclose in full any appropriate alternative procedures and treatment etc. that may serve as possible alternate options to study participation.

If the research could potentially involve risk, explain in full if compensation exists for this risk, what medical and/or psychosocial interventions are available as treatment, and where additional information can be obtained.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number\_\_\_\_\_).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at:

Mr. Majahamhle Mthethwa,  
Architecture Discipline,  
BESD,  
Office 848 Shepstone Building,  
Howard College  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Phone: 0027312601141  
Cell: 0027608756655

Email: [Mthethwam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Mthethwam@ukzn.ac.za) or majahamahlemthethwa@gmail.com  
Or

Prof. Adebayo  
Ambro Afrique Consultants Office  
23 Arcadia Road  
No. 1 Arcadia Park  
Morningside

Phone: 002731 209 4122  
Fax: 0027 31 209 3383

Email: [sivani@ambroafrique.co.za](mailto:sivani@ambroafrique.co.za)

or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

#### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

State clearly that participation in this research is voluntary (**and that participants may withdraw participation at any point**), and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. Describe the potential consequences to the participant for withdrawal from the study and the procedure/s required from the participants for orderly withdrawal. Under what circumstances will the researcher terminate the participant from the study?

State clearly if any costs might be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. If there are incentives or reimbursements for participation in the study, state how much and why they will be given.

Describe in detail the steps that will be taken to protect confidentiality of personal/clinical information, and the limits of confidentiality if applicable. Describe the fate of the data and stored samples. (**Information gathered will be store in a safe in my office or my supervisor for and thereafter shredded**)

-----

#### **CONSENT (Edit as required)**

I ..... have been informed about the study entitled  
**(SPACE-MAKING ELEMENTS IN TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENTS AS IDENTITY  
GENERATORS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN BUILT FORM: A Case of Bulawayo,  
Zimbabwe) by Mr Majahamahle Nene MTHETHWA.**

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

#### **HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion	YES / NO
Video-record my interview / focus group discussion	YES / NO
Use of my photographs for research purposes	YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Witness  
(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**N/A**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Translator  
(Where applicable)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



28 November 2016

Mr Majahmahle Nene Mthethwa 207501722  
School of Built Environment and Development Studies  
Howard College Campus

Dear Mr Mthethwa

Protocol Reference Number: HSS/2034/016D

Project title: Space-making elements in Traditional Settlements as identity generators of Contemporary Urban Built Form: A case of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

**Full Approval – Expedited Application**

In response to your application received 14 November 2016, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Professor AA Adebayo  
cc. Academic Leader Research: Professor Oliver Mtapuri  
cc. School Administrator: Ms Nolundi Mzolo

---

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8360/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbeo@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbeo@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

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# II FIELDWORK RESPONSE SAMPLES

## SECTION B

### OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

#### IDENTITY

1. How would describe your identity?
2. If ubuNdebele (Ndebeleness) is part of your identity descriptor, what do you understand to be ubuNdebele?
3. In your ubuNdebele descriptor, are there any geographical elements linked to it?
4. How do you link that descriptor to African identity?
5. What was the traditional Ndebele social structure like and what can be learnt from it in contemporary terms?
6. How is your home a reflection of your identity?

#### AFROCENTICITY

1. How do you feel about issues to do with African traditional customs and belief systems?
2. What is your attitude towards traditional customs and rites?
3. How were these activities traditionally accommodated by the built environment?
4. How are these rites and customs being currently practiced?
5. How are they currently accommodated in your home, neighbourhood, village, town or city?
6. What communal activities do you feel should be considered as part of future development of this town or city?
7. What images should be reflected by public spaces? Western or African? Why?

#### COSMOLOGY

1. From your understanding, what constitutes isiNdebele cosmology?
2. What elements drawn from isiNdebele cosmology, culture and customs should be considered in the design of communal spaces?
3. Provide any proverbs, fairy tales, idioms, or any other aspects of isiNdebele culture that should be considered when placemaking?
4. What were the traditional civic spaces and what were their functions?
5. How were any of them influenced by social structure, cosmology, etc?
6. How did this settlement come into being? Any historical, cosmological or political underpinning reasons?
7. How did the built form respond to the underlying reasons of the existence of this settlement?

#### SYMBOLIC INTERACTION THEORY

1. What do you understand by civic spaces?
2. Identify civic spaces that can be found in this city?
3. How are they used by the public?
4. What do you think should be done to these spaces to raise their public profile?
5. How are these spaces influenced by any geographical features around?
6. What geographical features are of importance in this community and
7. How has the built environment acknowledged them if at all? How?
8. What activities should be considered in the designing of public spaces?

9. How does your identity match or fit into the general civic spaces i.e., those in your homestead and those meant for the public?
10. If you were to give names to these civic spaces what would you call them and why?

## **SECTION C**

### **THE INTERVIEW**

#### **SAMPLE 1: INFORMANT Z**

Researcher is annotated as **MNM** and Informant as **Informant Z**.

All necessary introductions done as required in the consent form and signed accordingly.

**MNM:** It's great to meet and talk to you Sir.

**Informant Z:** Yes, great seeing you again. Let's get started.

**MNM:** My key question is "What are the key makings of a Ndebele homestead or settlement? What features differentiated it from any other?"

**Informant Z:** Do you sometimes read my articles in the Sunday News?

**MNM:** Not quite.

**Informant Z:** The reason I am asking is that these articles deal with these makings of generally African settlements. There is what I would term a hierarchy of makings of African built forms. I am saying generally because you might think there is something very unique about amaNdebele built forms yet there is very little. You see at a micro-level there are makings peculiar features at tribal level but at macro level there is a hierarchy of these makings. At a macro level there are makings of Africans, in general and then we also have features that are associated with the builder whether it's a basket, or carving. These will carry a community signature as well as the signature of the individual craft person. The two drivers of identity of these makings are related and that is important to bring the architecture or built form you are talking about. The second thing is what is it that informs these ideas? That is where the importance of the articles that I am doing now become important.

First thing is that the mind creates and it is very important to appreciate this point. Everything that we make, build, carved, etc., was created by the mind but then, what exists in the mind you can't see. This is then translated into something that you can also see and that is done generally by the hands. So, hands will do several things among others:

4. they will build. I am currently writing about Great Zimbabwe from a very different perspective. I argue that it is an art and no more;
5. they will mould. That is if we talking of clay or pottery generally. Then..
6. they will also... paint or engrave.

As long you see what I mean, hands will translate something created by the mind into something tangible. Thus the mind creates the intangibles. Even a book is created through the mind and then translated through what we term production through various processes. If it's a book, dvd, that are then translated through a production process. So, most things are created by the mind.

The reason why I start here, I see you think I have not answered your questions, ....

**MNM:** I understand where you coming from. Please carry on, Sir.

**Informant Z:** You have to appreciate how an African mind, not that of a European because I don't know it, functions? What influences it? This is what I have been writing about. I will quote Mathole Motsega: "As above and so is below". A Bible version of this expression would be "Let thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven". Now, the two mean exactly the same. An African! You know, you really need to read my current articles.

**MNM:** Where can I get these from?

**Informant Z:** Just get these from Sunday News and you can get these through the internet. These articles are titled Journey to Great Zimbabwe and I am on episode 5 which will be published this coming Sunday, 10 June 2018. Generally my recent work deals with this. My initial work was on cultural practices such as marriage rites, built form etc. but then I realised I needed to take a backward step after I realised that I was missing out something critical.

Something that is a practice is informed by the world view and that's what is important. World view, you can call it cosmology. I actually prefer the term cosmology. For an African, cosmology is an attempt to replicate heaven on earth. Understanding this philosophy will make you realise that an African settlement or homestead is a reflection of this thinking. So, I said in one of latest articles that I have been talking about "Gazing at Zimbabwe Ruins is like peering into the heavens". European archaeologists will not understand this. So, that's why I consider this to be a fresh look at Great Zimbabwe. European archaeologists worry about who built the Great Zimbabwe whilst I am flying above this. When I have dealt with that cultural edifice as an artistic creation you will not ask who built it and you will see that it was not built by Shona people yet some people have built their careers on this fallacy. I will be kind and focus on the artistic virtues of this cultural edifice. In essence the builders of this monument wanted to replicate the heavens. How? So, when the African looks at the heavens, by heavens I mean, the cosmos. I do not use the term heaven from a Christian perspective. I use the term to mean the universe. At night it turns into a chalk board for an African and has its characteristics:

1. Circularity – these happen to be the attributes of African aesthetics. You will in my articles where I say there is nothing that an African makes with his/her hand that is not beautiful. The reason being he/she aligns these creations with the cosmos which in itself is beautiful. Anyway let's continue with the attributes. An African sees circularity in nature. The earth itself is circular, so is the moon and indeed if there is a new planet discovered don't be surprised that it will be circularity attributes. I discovered that nature, without reading anybody's book,

that nature is all circular whether its human body, all of it is circular. There are no rectangular forms. No ninety degree angles. No straight lines. What we see as Africans are curved lines. So, Great Zimbabwe is about that. So, whilst we say it is an attribute of heavens, it is at the same time an attribute of African aesthetics. African beauty. So, our beauty is determined by the heavens. So, when African moulds a clay pot due to its circular nature, already it is beautiful. That is my theory. They he/she will add painting with maybe chevrons. Then I will argue, just remind me there are too many things I would want to mention. Let's continue with attributes... circularity. (10:50)

2. Movement: that movement is along an elliptical orbit – which is identical to circular. Everything including the universe is built around circularity. I didn't read about this but from observations. That movement needs description. That movement is not haphazard, it is rhythmic. Rhythm is important an African can see it. We can use another term for rhythm... seasonality. Because of this seasonality it carries an element of predictability. Another term is periodicity. Movement has to be very periodic and predictable. Sometimes we do not appreciate the importance of these things. Let's suppose the earth stopes without rotating or revolving, there won't be any seasons. Without seasons or those seasons without being regular, that's another descriptive term – regularity, this earth will be desolate. For example if it starts to rain now and we work our land and plant our crops and within two weeks its winter – that's irregular. That will be the end of life. Human beings would starve to death.

What is problematic about climatic change is that it is destroying regularity. Even your own body, you should read my articles, demands regularity – sleep, wake, sleep, wake etc. That is regularity. The moon and its phases des the same. The word in English for moon is menses. They saw that the cycle for the moon is 28 days. The cycle for women is 28 days. This appears in many African languages that “a woman is on the moon” when she is on her menstruation period due to that cycle. It is a cycle of life. It is a regeneration and rebirth. Rebirth, growth and development, death, rebirth. The cycle begins again. You see. Then that is your regularity movement with a rhythm. I think these will be chief ones. I am moving towards your primary question. The way we get there you will not be in a position to ask anything. This framework provides your answers because when an African builds he responds to these influences.

From the universe, an African has copied what Professor John Mead calls continuity. If you misunderstand an African with the idea of continuity then you will have missed his whole essence of existence. Continuity is about incrementalism. An isiNdebele saying goes “ukwanda kwaliwa ngabathakathi” (the growth of mankind has witches as its enemies. Only witches prefer communities to dwindle than to flourish). Human beings see heavenly bodies. The great, great, great grandparents saw the moon with their naked eyes so this represents permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, endlessness etc. those are the terms. To an African, that idea of permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, endlessness etc. is achieved through sexual reproduction. In this view sexual reproduction becomes a central phenomena because it ensure continuity. Don't ask me about my great grandfather, my grandfather, who is long gone, still exists through me, what he did with my great grandmother or what my parents did. This idea permeates African existence.

**MNM:** This is still part of the attributes we have been talking about?

**Informant Z:** Yes, the circle itself has no beginning nor does it have an end. What does that mean? It means eternity, endlessness and so is production. If we were to shake hands with our wives and do so until we die, that will be the end of humanity. Our bodies are endowed with specialise cells. They are generative cells. Hands do not have generative cells but these are only found around the waste. The waste is an important area due its regenerative cells and hence the focus of an African on a chevron design. Chevron design is a two-dimensional representation of a 3-D reality. In nature we do not have chevron yet what we are calling chevron is actually triangular which is an open V. In terms of African aesthetics to achieve beauty this open V is repeated. What kind of repetition? It is rhythmic. You cannot have a small V or a big one. The rhythm then introduces on of the characteristics of African beauty discussed earlier. The chevron the captures some of the elements of an African beauty. If you look around these days you will find increased women with their clothes with more chevrons now than a decade ago. The chevron represents a woman. When we get into the bookshop I will show you books that explain where the chevron form comes from. The chevron represents the body of a woman. That part of her body that contains the uterus because it is where it is important. All of us is our entry into the world – the uterus. What a man does is to deposit a sperm and this is why in my writings you will hear me say some of these insects after mating they devour their male counterparts. This is because their job will be done and their bodies will be used as protein to nurture the foetus – the next cycle of life.

So, if you approach our questions from this perspective our story becomes a gem. Now, with Europeans I have a problem with them because they say our world view is superstition.

No, no, no, there is a meaning. As Africans we understand it but they are too lazy to get into our minds. I always say don't seek to get into the shoes of an African because he never had one. He always had a mind. Whatever he made, whatever he painted, whatever he crafted all came from the mind and translated by the hand. Once you understand that then you will begin to know and understand an African. The issue of thinking that all things African are superstitious is driven by laziness to think. Get into his mind. So, you will get one of my books called "Rock art of the Matobo Hills: Seeking to understand the mind of the San Artist". Again you will find that Europeans are trying to interpret this art in their own way. No. Get into the mind of the San. This is why I like a man called David Lewis. A man who made an interpretation of rock art in South Africa and has an Institute named after him in Johannesburg. The name is there in my articles. It's him and Professor Tom Hoffmann. I respect those two. Tom Hoffmann tried but did not get people to support him. The tragic with us is our own Professors. I don't like them. They follow things they don't know about. They can't think independently. Why? Study the ways of an African and understand them and him/her and take the lead and not allow Europeans to lead us about us. I don't wanna hear about this and that is why I attack these African professors. You professors you fail to follow this kind of thinking then you will never have to worry or argue about who built Great Zimbabwe. Why do we have that conical Tower in Great Zimbabwe? It is because it's a fallacy. It's penis. The question is what does it stand for? We cannot speak about endlessness, permanency, immortality, continuity, fertility, etc. without



talking about the penis and one cannot talk about it without mentioning the testicles. You find these at the Great Zimbabwe and these Professors cannot see them.

**MNM:** This is a fresh approach. I appreciate having to discuss with you such fresh ideas.

**Informant X:** I get inspiration from nature. There is no greater teacher than nature but one has to be observant. I am glad that some of these lessons I got from my father. It's a pity we discover the greatness in beings after they have passed on. One other thing is that of symbolism. If you don't understand an African symbolism and how his world works you will never understand him. Why? I remember my father asked me to take an axe and chop three different trees. Tree A, B and C and go back there after let's say six months. The tree that naturally closes the axe cut is the one that is used as medicine for curing physical wounds we suffer. When he said this I was taking it literally but now I realise that that tree as perhaps some attribute or chemical that can be used to treat wounds. A tree like *iphane* does not close the axe cut but those such as *iminyela*, *ivimil* and similar trees they do close the cut and hence are used to treat wounds. Now, it's not about the chemical composition perhaps or there could be chemical components but my father like other Africans did not have the capacity to isolate the active ingredients. So, for him the cutting of the tree bark, grinding and drying and burning it was a process they used to treat wounds. This works and that is what matters. As Africans we symbolise a lot of these things.

Where were we? I think the attributes of beauty. For as long as one appreciates, again, that architecture is an aspect of art. Architecture and art are beautiful. So, everything you call architecture, that of an African, not the European one since it's outside my area interest, is beautiful. Everything that an African creates is beautiful because he never creates anything that is not circular. No matter what he creates does not have a right angle. Think about your artefacts back in your rural home. Think about your kraal. Think about the perimeter of your homestead. Through to your home. Its walls or cone or spherical roof of the amaZulu *iqhugwana*. *Iqhugwana* and the Shona hut are the same. Don't be confuse by the hemispherical and cone on cylinder shapes. That is why I argue in one of my articles that don't be confounded by the enormity by Great Zimbabwe's walls. No. What matters there is how the stone was placed in space and circular. A Ndebele used timber to build a circular form and a Tonga used reeds to achieve the same. Now when talking about the makings of built form, you might think there is something exceptional of Ndebele built forms. Our African-ness lies not in our colour but in our cosmology. Our world view. We view the universe through the same lens. So, when we replicate the heavens that we see through the same lenses there will be similarities. Whether one uses a hemispherical form, a conical form, a cylinder. From a scientific perspective when an ovum fuse with a sperm they form a zygote which is circular in form. It is like a dot and it grows. If there was no specialisation, diversification, we would be big rolling circles but we are not like that because of differentiation. So, a circle represents that form which is undifferentiated. So, a beehive is an inferior form to the uplifted one with a roof and cylinder that one is differentiated. AmaNdebele went through the three stages beginning with the beehive followed by what I would term an uplifted mushroom. The roof was not like that of the Shona people and looked like a mushroom. The walls continued to be short and entrance attained through kneeling. The walls were only plastered inside not outside until they got to today where there is a cone on cylinder although it not a cone as such.

I you go to Ntabazinduna area you will see what I am talking about. The roof is still tilted towards the sphere. Its angle is less acute compared to Shona ones as a response to wet conditions. More rain there than in Ndebele territories. This way architecture responds to the environment. Some of us have studied culture not architecture. I have used an expression that Mr John Knight has adopted, that “architecture is a mirror of a community”. So, when one looks at the architecture one gets to determine what type of people constitute that community. So, your questions are about learning to understand what Ndebele people are through their architecture. This is because they have mirrored themselves. Their culture. This being an art form, art is an effortless expression of our culture.

**MNM:** Are you aware of symbolic interaction theory. Reflection of self by the environment and vice versa?

**Informant Z:** Yes, correct. It's within the confines of such theories. When man builds he reflects the environment. At the end the environment will reflect him. You in my writings I talk about human beings reflecting the heavens when they are still alive and when he is dead the things that he takes with him to heaven where he originally was will be there. This then reflects his life on earth. A man who has passed on takes with him his belongings to heaven. I was writing about the burial of Chief Gampu Sithole, It was recorded by a certain Pastor from Thekwane, Reverend Carter. What Carter was talking about was to relate what happened at the funeral of Gampu Sithole which in effect was cultural practices. What made me write about it was to interpret about women who had dressed in traditional garbs and why they did so. The fact that they threw a container with water on top of a grave why was that done? We should as Africans do better than Native Commissioners on our culture and we can do it by getting into the African mind. If you remain outside an African mind you will never know him/her. All you will hear is about superstition and pagan religion all because one did not attempt to find out the underlying reasons. Why the African does what he/she does. Why place stones in a particular manner? Why create a mound of soil over the grave? Do not think the African could not have made that grave flat. He could. He chose to make a mound. Why? Don't just say they built a mound of soil and end there. That's what a Native Commissioner would say.

**MNM:** How about those who were buried in the caves, does it fit into the philosophy of a person crossing over to the other world with his/her belongings?

**Informant Z:** Yes, one thing you must know about a cave is that it is raw as you will see in my next article this coming Sunday. I am saying the Great Zimbabwe speaks to us through the rock because imagine if they did not build the Great Zimbabwe out of stone the language of Great Zimbabwe would have been lost and there is no way it was going to speak to us. What has made the Great Zimbabwe speak to us is because of the rock. Rock and its solidity therefore represents continuity, permanency, immortality, fertility, endlessness etc. not through reproduction but through its resistance to weather. Thus why Great Zimbabwe speaks to us but we choose not to listen to its language all we do is to ask who built it. This should not be the issue. Let us let Great Zimbabwe say who built it and it speaks loud and clear if we care to listen and see. So, I will interpret the Great Zimbabwe like it has never been interpreted by any of these professors.

**MNM:** There is an interesting Masters dissertation written by Kelly Aspinall but her approach is very different from yours.

Informant Z: In my interpretation I will prove that the so-called Zimbabwe bird is actually not a bird. That language is very advanced. I sometimes look at that so-called bird and think an African is streets ahead. That is not a bird. It may have resembled a bird but it's not. The idea of a Zimbabwe Bird is a European imagination since they were the first to excavate the site.

The problem with you academics is thing were the Europeans controlled scholarship and academy through literature review. That's where you got blinkered. You see I do not come from such a tradition. I am free from such and I am a loose canon. I don't need to be tied to some ideology. I don't belong to architecture. I don't belong to science. I am Informant X full stop and this gives me freedom to think independently. That is why some of us decided we are going to write without enormous citations. Then we write profusely for everyone else to quote us because we have to make a break. We consider ourselves to be rebels but we shall continue.

You see what happens with the so-called Zimbabwe bird is a very high level artistic abstraction. What you think is a neck is not a one. There is no bird's head there. What you see at the bottom are a woman's feet. Look at the toes, you will see that those are human ones. There are professors who have queried why a bird should have human beings-like legs. The toes are more than those of a bird. How about the mouth with a rim, what is that? They queried. It's all because that is not a bird. What we think are wings is actually nothing..... in our language it is .....

**MNM:** *Ngamalebe* (labia).

**Informant Z:** Now you are becoming an African scholar. You know, the art at the Great Zimbabwe is mind blowing. That is how Africans will see this thing. It's because in most African cultures, it does not matter whether it's Shona or Ndebele, there are things that are considered to be taboo especially around sexuality and these expressions are then camouflaged. What was expressed here is camouflaged pornography. (draws a triangle). There are three countries with this triangle: South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.. The triangle is the body of a woman where there is uterus. What we call a fallacy is represented by an arm. The problem is that in this case it is two-dimensional. The black colour in those flags is actually a penis in 2-D entering into the vagina. The triangle that is looking up is a woman and that looking down is a man. Even the Palestinian flag has the triangle. I don't mean the Great Zimbabwe was built by the Bantu but start talking about it they will fight with you. The ruins were built by Africans. Africa in terms of its attributes was East of the Red Sea. If you fail to understand that in terms cosmology the east of the Red Sea was part of Africa you will be missing a true history of the black man. Even if you check the walls of were you come from you will find that on the walls you have a window, what shape is that? Triangle. We were not taught by anyone about this shape. This is us. It extended beyond the Red Sea. (draws a chevron in a conical form). I remember flying to Addis Ababa we saw a conical tower from above and that's when I realised that everything in the universe is generated from a circle. A herring bone is a reconfiguration of the same thing – a series of triangles or cones in 2-D. The other one is called a dentil. All these are reconfigurations of a circle.

**MNM:** When looking at back to back triangles did this not inspire rectilinear forms to those African communities that ended up veering off the circle?

**Informant Z:** No, we never had any rectilinear forms. Currently the houses we come across in Matobo area is rectilinear. Even the amaNdebele grave was circular with a body made to sit in it. So, the rectangle comes with colonisation. You will see a house. Europeans generally don't appreciate circular forms although they are beginning to tolerate it. You will see even missionaries at Inyathi built a hybrid form of circles and triangles. This form is also becoming popular in places like Tsholotsho. These forms are curvilinear. In terms of cosmos and African beauty, the moon has a crescent in its various phases. This is part of the circle. That is why we associate beauty with being circular. A beautiful lady has to have this characteristic. A lady with curvaceous body with round bottoms is what we call beauty. That person is called *igcwalaguma* in isiNdebele. Why? It's because our eyes are trained to see curvilinear forms when searching for beauty. These are some of the characteristics of a beautiful woman and they attract the opposite sex, naturally.

Right, let's continue. I think we have covered a lot of ground.

**MNM:** Going back to the isiNdebele built form....

**Informant Z:** Most of the things have been covered. The only thing to note with an African is that whatever is done at macro-level is repeated at micro-level. The homestead at micro-level is circular and so is the hut. So, it's a hierarchy of circles.

**MNM:** And when it comes to actual planning how are various units of the homestead placed?

**Informant Z:** The key thing to note is that you are dealing with gendered space. Generally the front in Ndebele culture, and its true of all black Africa, don't think of Ndebele people alone, is male. My expression to capture this is: "Apart in life and apart in death". I am talking about Ndebeles. Left hand side is associated with women and the right hand side is associated with men. Men don't stay together with women and that is the apart that I am referring to. This is repeated at macro-level. At village level. At homestead level. Front part male. Front is male and that is where you find your kraals (izibaya). That is where they have their toilets. That is why when we travel buses to rural areas you hear a familiar instruction of women to the left and men to the right during pit stops. Even in most Ndebele Churches, the spaces is similarly arranged. At death, the father is buried in the kraal at the front of the homestead whilst the mother is buried at the back where we have granaries. Women's space is at the back of the home stead and they take care of grains and feeding the family. Men's space is at the front and that is where we find enkundleni – multipurpose space for masculine activities such as carving, cooking of bovine heads, making of yokes etc. That's why you hear the saying: *indaba esegudwini*. That is where men smoke *igudu* (device with water for smoking weed). Normally they would smoke when discussing critical issues hence *indaba esegudwini*.

When it comes to Old Bulawayo, what you will find is right at the back that is where you would find King Lobengula's Residence. Usually the King occupied the highest ground on the settlement or in the generality of the landscape. The location of the

King's residence was highest to express the King's status. No house was to be higher than the King's one. You see the Bulawayo occupied by the State House it is actually on the highest point – something I noticed when I went some distance and looked at its position. (We sketch the plan of Old Bulawayo).

#### **SAMPLE 2: INFORMANT 7**

### **FEATURES OF AN ISINDEBELE HOMESTEAD**

Typical questions asked were as follows:

1. What do you understand by a traditional isi-Ndebele homestead (umuzi)? How are its various components located in relationship with each other? Does a homestead have defined boundaries? Give us isi-Ndebele names and explanations where appropriate.
2. How many entrances does "umuzi" have and what is the significance of each of the gateways?
3. As one enters "umuzi" through the main gate what components are observed first.
4. Where are the livestock kraals located relatively, how far are they located in relationship to the core of the homestead?
5. Where was the cemetery located?
6. What features identify an isi-Ndebele house? Give answer in terms of structure, form, material and spatial meanings.

#### **General Layout of an isiNdebele Homestead**

A square boundary (uthango) built from timber poles and two gates were important features of an isi-Ndebele homestead. The two entrances were located in the eastern and western sides of uthango.

As one enters through the eastern gate there is a parents' bedroom directly ahead. To the left of parents' bedroom there was a girls' bedroom (ixhiba lamantombazana) while the one for boys (ixhiba lamajaha/labafana) was at the back. The girls' bedroom was at the front for easy access because in the past it was acceptable for boys from outside the family to visit girls without any hassles but it was done with respect. The position of the girls' bedroom also ensured their security. To the left of the parents sleeping space was the visitors sleeping space.

To the right of parents' bedroom there was a kitchen (umkulu). The houses at the back but inside the boundary were the maize granaries (iziphala). A granary (isiza) for sorghum was built outside the homestead mostly on the eastern side.

Kraals were built to the western side of the homestead at some distance to prevent the nuisance of flies. The kraal (isibaya) had on gate (isango) facing to the west. The family father was buried on the southern side of the kraal whilst the family mother was buried behind the granaries. The reason for this was that the family mother was responsible for feeding the family and all the products from the fields and gardens. The father's strength and dignity was measured in terms of number of cattle he had.

#### **Features of an isi-Ndebele House**

The isi-Ndebele house was basically circular in form (isigombolozu) facing westwards. There was a raised platform (umbundu) right round the house and on the right hand side inside the hut. The house a tall doors and opened to the right behind which men sat. (Amathikili) was a form of thatching whereby the grass forms circular steps from top of the cone to the bottom.



### **SAMPLE 3: INFORMANT 9**

#### **FEATURES OF AN ISINDEBELE HOMESTEAD**

Typical questions asked were as follows:

1. What do you understand by a traditional isi-Ndebele homestead (umuzi)? How are its various components located in relationship with each other? Does a homestead have defined boundaries? Give us isi-Ndebele names and explanations where appropriate.
2. How many entrances does “umuzi” have and what is the significance of each of the gateways?
3. As one enters “umuzi” through the main gate what components are observed first.
4. Where are the livestock kraals located relatively, how far are they located in relationship to the core of the homestead?
5. Where is the cemetery located?
6. What features identify an isi-Ndebele house? Give answer in terms of structure, form, material and spatial meanings.

#### **General Layout of an isiNdebele Homestead**

There are two ways of looking at the concept of a homestead (umuzi). There is a homestead for ordinary people like you and me and there is that of a person like Chief A. Chief A has nineteen villages under him and in each village there are approximately 200 houses. Each of these villages is “umuzi”- a homestead. The second type of “umuzi” is that of an individual. This may be a house like those in urban areas or a typical rural individual’s place of residence. This therefore means a village or a house depending on the level of scale that one is interested in. This therefore depends on you, which one you would like us to discuss about. Another isi-Ndebele term for a village is “ixhiba”. This term also applies to bedrooms for girls and boys in an ordinary individual’s homestead- ixhiba lamankazana (girls bedroom) and ixhiba lamajaha (boys bedroom).

We are going to discuss a set-up of an ordinary village:

There were a number of features that comprised an isi-Ndebele homestead. The first thing was a circular or square boundary that was constructed from thorn bushes and brunches. The main entrance into the homestead was through a gate on the western side of the boundary. A minor gate was located at the back of the homestead, which was predominantly on the eastern side of the homestead. As one enters the homestead the first huts were the bedrooms of the family parents (idlunkulu) and to the left of it were girls’ (ixhiba lamantombazana) bedroom. Situated to the right was the boys’ bedroom (ixhiba lamajaha).

Idale is a space provided for men outside the homestead and mostly on the western side. This space was located near the cattle kraal (isibaya). Men used this space for dining and lounging. Idale was also a place where all traditional trades that covered carpentry were carried out.

Inkundla is a place that takes the functions of a court and can also be considered as a meeting place for the village people. This is normally found at the western side of the Chief’s or King’s palace. Normally, inkundla is outside the homestead boundary fence. Usually, there is a big tree next to it that provides shade and shelter to the users. The functions of idale and inkundla are similar but different in scale and scope.

Granaries are located at the back of the homestead and there are two types- the one where dry maize cobs are stored straight after harvesting (isihudlu) and one where groundnuts, sorghum and maize grain are stored to keep them fresh through to the next season (isiphala). An isiphala and isihudlu are built within the homestead boundary.

In terms of isiNdebele culture the burial places for male and female members of the family are sited at different locations around a homestead. Male members are usually buried to the west of the village in or just outside the isibaya (livestock kraal) whilst female counterparts are buried to the east behind the grain silos.

### **Features of an isiNdebele House**

In terms of the architecture of the huts, the bedroom for the family father and mother is the most decorated. There is a central pole located in the middle of the circular hut called insika. Insika supports poles (amalugwana) that form a cone-shaped roof and go all the way down over the wall. These poles (amalugwana) have their bases located just outside a raised pavement (isitubhu) that ran right round the hut. Isitubhu or umbundu is used for sitting around when people are relaxing.

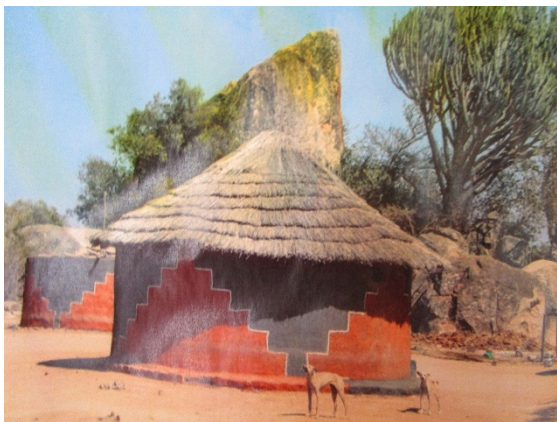
Thatching is done in such a way that it forms a tent structure that follows amalugwana as nodal points. It is done in circular steps (amathikili). At the top of the cone-shaped roof there is a portion of thatching that is done to prevent leakage during rainy seasons- this is known as isihlothi. The doors are made long enough to enable tall people to go into the hut without bending- "liphumalimi" (walk out in a standing position- without bending).

Doors open to the right where men sit while women sit on the left side of the hut. This is done so that women can keep watchful eyes on the oncoming visitors or strangers while men are ready to attack any invaders. In fact the door is used as a shield in such encounters. The door is held using the left hand and the spear (umkhonto or isijula) or axe (ihloka or imbazo) are used to attack the intruders. As for the kitchen (umukulu) there is an internal raised platform for men to sit on. This is also called isitubhu. At the back of the hut (emsamo) there is a raised platform (ithala) that can be elaborately decorated for keeping kitchen utensils.

### III FIELDWORK PHOTO SAMPLES















# IV REPERTORY GRID TECHNIQUE

## The Bulawayo Civic Centre Precinct

1. How would you rank the Civic Centre space against inkundla/idale or fireplace in a traditional isiNdebele homestead with respect to given elements?

### Elements Index:

1. Afrocentric: endowed with African values
2. Coloniality: endowed with foreignness values
3. Symbolic interactionism: reflection of self and self-reflection between human beings and environment
4. Image: visual impression of perception
5. Existentialism: Something that exists. Pragmatic physical presence

Rate elements (1 = very poor and 10 = Excellent)

	Constructs	Ave.	FIELDWORK ELEMENTS				
			1 Afrocentric (Ubuntu)	2 Coloniality (umbuso woncindezelo)	3 Symbolic interactionism (Ubuntu bendawo)	4 Imagery (isithombe)	5 Existentialism (ubukhona bendawo)
<b>A</b>	Location						
<b>B</b>	Site form						
<b>C</b>	Building forms						
<b>D</b>	Colour						
<b>E</b>	Materials						
<b>F</b>	Landscaping						
<b>G</b>	Physical response						
<b>H</b>	Cultural response						
<b>I</b>	Historical response						
	Average score						

**Elements** are about factors that would influence placemaking i.e. respond to people's needs thus producing people-driven or collectively centred civic spaces in contemporary African built environments.

# V REFERENCES

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